

A Failed Religion: Necessity and Freedom
in the Romantic Poets

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Defined in terms of Newtonian mechanics, Necessity, the causal power of determinism, had become a philosophic cornerstone and the chief engine of Enlightenment hopes for the moral progress of society. Though Romanticism then arose to counter materialist mechanism, the English Romantics were concerned to sustain the Enlightenment hopes for moral progress. Mechanical Necessity retained an allure for idealistic youths -- like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley -- looking for a benign power outside of establishment religion. Their delight rapidly soured, however, as the destructive consequences of necessitarianism for human freewill, moral responsibility, and the creative imagination became apparent. They then found routes of escape from mechanical Necessity in Kantian idealism and a doctrine of the creative imagination. This I characterize as negative freedom. Neither Keats nor Byron were necessitarians and from their earliest verse had been defining freedom in just this way: as the release of the self (the will and the imagination) from external constraints.

The former necessitarians, rather than rejecting Necessity outright, sought to redefine it in religious terms. They made determinism teleological, moral, and organic. Following the lead of Coleridge, all of these poets, except Byron, speculated on immanent Necessities, moral impulsions arising from the very principles of the mind and the self. Freedom no longer was defined as liberty from external constraints, but as obedience to an inner (ultimately divine) Necessity. External determination means slavery, self-determination means freedom. In this way, moral responsibility was restored (in part) and the poetic imagination infused with new, quasi-divine authority. The Romantics were struggling toward a new, transcendental religion (though Coleridge resolutely defined it in Christian terms), one promising moral ascendancy by a Necessity redefined as freedom.

Only Byron stood outside of this rush of religiousness, and his basically Enlightenment skepticism became the paradigm of the collapse of Romantic transcendentalism. Each of the other Romantics endured a personal struggle toward proving a Necessity to transcendence and each, alone, suffered a fall into a recognition of separateness, the old message of corrupt man's estrangement from the divine. This is where Byron had resided from the beginning, and it defines modern "angst." But as Byron had neither sought the ascent nor suffered the fall, he was able to point the way to a pragmatic reconciliation with our mortal state.

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PREFACE

Necessity and freedom, in the poetic and emotional struggle of the Romantic poets have the manner of a grand dialectic. The Romantics both pursued and fled from freedom, with Necessity as ally or the chief enemy. They saw freewill as the sole means to moral coherence or proof of moral anarchy. Ultimately, as they struggled toward a new, secular "religion" through the imagination, both Necessity and freewill reversed their meaning. At the least I hope to make more coherent what the Romantics have to say on morality, progress, and revelation, by clarifying these concepts. More importantly, however, I offer a paradigm of the religious yearning in man, a need which urgently refuses to be neglected. I chart the progress of a religion which failed because of its exclusiveness; but the need remains and religions or their surrogates continue to rise, fall, and rise again.

I have adhered generally to the canonical five--Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron--not because they were the most important in their own time, but because they are so to us. As a group, they well illustrate the transcendental story, offering a coherent community of minds, with traceable lines of influence or reaction stretching between each member of the five. I spend little time on Blake precisely because of his relative isolation and because he alone did not share a youth shaken by the French Revolution.

A confusing and demanding age left no one alone with his inner purposes. All of these poets explored their doubts and vacillations through their works. Wordsworth, worst of all, resists attempts to codify his views into a coherent picture. Maddeningly honest, ever generous with competing ideas, and naturally dialectic^{al} as a thinker, Wordsworth consistently, almost inevitably, even consciously, contradicted himself. Confusion and dichotomy may in fact be the poet's final statement on many subjects, though there will be nonetheless flashes of a deeper structure which will seem somewhat stable or at least evolving in a describable way. I involve in this study mostly the young and middle-aged Wordsworth, of the years of greatest genius and influence culminating in *The Excursion* (1814).

With Coleridge the problem becomes the wealth of thought. His struggles for unity engage him inwardly, and we receive but the fragments of a grand

temple-building in his mind, a promised magnum opus. He shares with Keats and Shelley the poet's lament that the holy city defies description. Yet I ask from Coleridge, the poet, the philosopher's meticulousness and clarity, and from Coleridge, the philosopher, the poet's sublimity and vision. He is uneasy between these two mistresses. Coleridge writes in a letter to Thelwall that, the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul "may be very wild philosophy; but it is very intelligible poetry . . ." (17 Dec 1796). In *Biographia Literaria*, we are told that "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science [i.e. philosophy], by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth . . ." (2: 14.10). Successful synthesis of a kind, of course, has been managed by writers such as Pope, Voltaire, Shelley, Keats, and Nietzsche, among others:

How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is *Apollo's* lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets. . . .
(Milton, *Comus* 479ff)

Coleridge, however, subordinated poetry to prose, beauty to truth leading to a decline in poetic quality and quantity as his prose writings increased. With the surer, more didactic voice of philosophy carrying his message, poetry became redundant.

What is it that I employ metaphysics on? . . . To perplex our dearest notions and living moral instincts? . . . [rather] to support old and venerable truths, to kindle, to project, to make the reason spread light over our feelings, to make our feelings diffuse vital warmth through our reason . . . (notebook entry; qtd. in Potter 426).

Romantic poetry seeks the sublime, to "perplex"; philosophy, he tells us, must confirm the known, not explore the unknown. Christian truth, the duty which faith demands, arrives whole. This discipline (philosophy misused) smothered the organic life of those brief years of "Kubla Khan," "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," and "Frost at Midnight." But the keys to Coleridge lie in the prose, and there I will look for him.

The evangelical metaphysics of Coleridge was fatal to the "clear thoughts" and "lively images" in "dramatic form" of Wordsworth's natural bent, but the better

for us, as Coleridge sparked Wordsworth's only great poetry. Shelley spurred Byron in exactly the same Neo-Platonic direction--one seen, ironically, as Wordsworthian--but in this case it ran contrary to Byron's best work. In Shelley we have a better poet and more original thinker than Coleridge. A natural philosopher as much as a poet, his best work comes to us as the most perfect melding of these two disciplines in English Literature.

Byron and Keats approach "philosophy" with the disdainful carelessness of the ignorant, Keats using the term for any deliberate, rationally considered thought, almost whatever the subject, and Byron as a synonym for stoicism. Keats distrusted what he called "consecutive reasoning," partly I think out of insecurity for his own meagre education in subjects available to classes higher than his, but mostly as a full product, like Byron, of a Neo-Gothic age. He inveighs against certainty to the philosopher in his circle, Benjamin Bailey: "Now, my dear fellow, I must once for all tell you I have not one idea of the truth of any of my speculations--I shall never be a reasoner, because I care not to be in the right . . ." (ltr., 13 Mar 1818).

Slipping even further the bonds of rational thought, but taking this freedom as license to power instead of Wordsworthian passiveness, Byron realizes the culmination or extinction of several Romantic trends. Like Keats, Byron completely lacked the mind and temperament for any analytic thought, and was, consequently, equally hostile to the very idea. His mind flowed with intermittent power and frequent turbulence, but across a wide plain, not a deep channel. Whatever deep upwellings do tinge the surface do so with as much sublimity to poet as to reader. Yet, in the absence of the analytical mind, the passions--desires and fears--of the heart fill the vacuum. Byron and Keats both sought to make a virtue out of this emotional Necessity.

It is a commonplace in studies of Byron that despite his protests that his characters are not autobiographical, the poetic "self," tyrannous and promiscuous, stares back at the reader with a mixture of defiance and vulnerability which cannot be ignored. Though we get nothing from him but theatrics and evasion in even the most "private" of writings, liberally mixed with the fireworks of his own insecurities, still we cannot ignore the man behind the verse. His life and

character does fascinate us, transfixing us as we would stare at an out-of-control airplane, a violent seduction, or a mental breakdown. We are mesmerized as much by powerlessness as by power and seamless assurance. Byron, in the private and public man, engages us on both levels.

My discussion ranges widely but not inclusively. I trace many related ideas through these poets without pretending to illuminate each poet in the light of every idea. Instead, I have sought to trace themes, beliefs, and revelations through their most prominent exponents--e.g. Wordsworth's use of Nature and Coleridge's handling of idealism--following the general course of Romantic transcendentalism.

The abbreviations used are as follows:

- Coleridge: "Aids" - *Aids to Reflection*, "AP" - *Anima Poetae*, "BL" - *Biographia Literaria*, "Conciones" - *Conciones ad Populum*, "C & S" - *On the Constitution of Church and State*, "LRR" - *Lectures on Revealed Religion*, "Notes" - *Collected Notes*, "TT" - *Table Talk*, "Works" - *The Complete Works*.
- Byron: "CH" - *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, "DJ" - *Don Juan*, "English Bards" - *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.
- Shelley: "PU" - *Prometheus Unbound*, "QM" - *Queen Mab*, "R of I" - *The Revolt of Islam*.
- Wordsworth: All references to *The Prelude* are to the 1805 version unless otherwise noted.
- Other: "PL" - Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "PJ" - Godwin's *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, "FQ" - Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, "Obsv" - Hartley's *Observations on Man*.

Quotations are rendered in the original language--unless I was unable to locate the original--with the exception of Greek. Style (including documentation) is in accordance with the latest MLA guidance (1985).¹

¹Walter S. Achtert and Joseph Gibaldi, *The MLA Style Manual* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1985).

CHAPTER I DEFINITIONS

The message of the eighteenth century to the young Romantics on Necessity, the causal, deterministic power, was confused and contradictory. The French *philosophes* rejoiced in it, at least those of most influence on English philosophic radicalism: Helvetius, Baron d'Holbach, and Condorcet. No firmer allegiance aided the triumph of liberty and equality than that of Necessity to education. Among many in the English Enlightenment, however, Necessity was treated somewhat like a sister-in-law of doubtful morals: as a slight embarrassment, but something they were unable to denounce. The difficulty arose in that Locke's elimination of innate ideas left only a providential (intervening) God with the power and certain goodness to promise redemption. And in an age professing Newtonian deism, which was skepticism or atheism more often in fact, God was in no position to play this role. This left man as clay of nearly unlimited plasticity, his Maker now his society (his parents and teachers).

All on Necessity, freewill, or moral development had to account for Locke's sensationalist epistemology. Locke himself, though a committed Christian, squirmed uncomfortably between undeniable God and undeniable Necessity. Privately confessing to this lacuna in his account of responsibility and culpability, Locke writes to William Molyneux, 20 January 1693:

though it be unquestionable that there is omnipotence and omniscience in God our maker, and I cannot have a clearer perception of any thing than that I am free, yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent with omnipotence and omniscience in God, though I am as fully perswaded of both as of any truths that I most firmly assent to.

Their various contortions, then, in attempting to reconcile the ways of each to the other met with little more success than the seventeenth century apologists' struggle to marry science and theology, and were in fact a continuation of that endeavor. The final grand unification theory was Kant's, before science shrugged off all philosophers and poets and asserted its rule as the modern age began.

The Romantics needed atomistic, mechanical Necessity so long as they remained committed to the progress of man and society. But this commitment lasted no longer than the fevered young man's dreams of Wordsworth and Coleridge (revived briefly in Shelley). Ultimately, public issues lie outside and even opposed to the essence of English poetic Romanticism, which was revelation, spirituality, and the workings of the private mind. Because mechanical Necessity characterized the Enlightenment, culminating in radical French materialism and Revolution, the gothicism and idealism, medieval and German, of the English Romantic poets seemed fresh and innovative. But rejecting the immediate past left them with no models at all but those from a remoter past. It has been reserved to the confidence and blind foolhardiness of our own age to rush into the future disdaining mentors or continuity. The success of unsentimental science has encouraged us to apply the same attitude to other byways of our lives. This approach had its birth in the *philosophes* but was yet uncongenial to the British mind. So the English Romantics came to beat the Enlightenment with a medieval stick, the mind with the heart, skepticism with faith, and in doing so, in ignoring the already unstoppable momentum of materialist science rushing out of the Enlightenment, theirs became in effect a counterrevolution, one by its very nature ineffective beyond the world of the arts.

In its broadest sense, Necessity, with its relevant concepts, may be categorized as follows:

1. Mechanical Necessity:
 - a. External - Nature, Newtonian Law, Determinism, Chance (as Fortune, i.e. cause unperceived).
 - b. Internal - Moral Sense, Associationism, Human Nature.
2. Teleological Necessity:
 - a. External - Providence, Fate, Nemesis, Chance (as Fortune, i.e. cause unperceived).
 - b. Internal - Providence, Organicism, the voice of Conscience (the heart).
3. Freewill:
 - a. Self-Determination (an inner Necessity) - Idealism the creative Self), the Byronic Will, the Imagination, Love.
 - b. Existential Freewill - Uncaused acts of will. Will fully spontaneous.

These are the terms as relevant to a discussion of the five English Romantic poets I am discussing. The chart applies wholly to no one of the poets--each has his peculiar definitions and these concepts variously merge or further subdivide in the minds of these unphilosophers. Existential freewill does not even exist as a stated possibility in any of the poets; I offer it only to establish the far boundary.

I.A Mechanical Necessity

Shelley gives us the classical definition of mechanical Necessity in a note to VI.198 of *Queen Mab*:

an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other place than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connection between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature [i.e. the Newtonian universe], the consequent conjunction of similar events, and the constant inference of one from the other [see Hume].

and he subsumes man into this system exactly as Enlightenment materialists such as Hartley, Hume, Priestley, Godwin, and the *philosophes* had done:

Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act: in the eternity which preceded his birth a chain of causes was generated, which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is.

The negative, fatalistic side of determinism, the price paid for this sort of humanism in resignation and despair, will surface in the discussions to come, especially as concerns Byron. This we recall of Stoicism, the *apatheia* of Zeno, more than its powers for optimism (for which, see Marcus Aurelius' crediting his own education to its powers in his *Meditations*). Zeno's slave, upon being beaten, argued for the separation of responsibility from culpability, that is, he could not be blamed because he had be^{en} destined from all eternity to commit the offence. Zeno agreed, adding, however, continuing to thrash him, that by the same token he had been destined to beat him for it. The kinship of Stoicism and Christianity we may see in Marcus Aurelius.

As the quotation from Shelley above showed, Hume's denial of the certainty of causal connection little diverted the necessitarians. Hume himself had to bow to practicality; "experience," which is the only thing which suggests to us even the possibility of causal connection in the first place, will be sufficient to assume Necessity as a natural law for practical purposes: "Here then are two particulars, which we are to consider as essential to necessity, *viz.* the constant *union* and the *inference* of the mind; and wherever we discover these we must acknowledge a necessity" (*Treatise* 2: 3.1.400).

Mechanical Necessity--Necessity as the determining power in materialist determinism--overwatched the Enlightenment from two separate pillars: one based on atomism, looking at a universe defined as the collective motion of billiard ball-like particles, and one envisioning the universe as clockwork. Atomistic determinism (riding on the wave of seventeenth and eighteenth century science) tended to deny both freewill and destiny. It neither implied nor needed a deity, and scoffed at the notion of purpose or benign intent in the mechanical workings of things. This at least was where it had arrived by the late Enlightenment, especially in France. In itself it made no claims either way about progress. The clockwork analogy, on the other hand, fathered by Newton and Boyle, popularized (most immediately by Paley) as the argument from design, did assert destiny and divine purpose, though it gradually came less and less to require God Himself. The great majority of Enlightenment thinkers embraced this view precisely because it accounted for both science and humanist hopes for progress, while accommodating the emotional need for teleology and divine moral authority. It neatly sidestepped God, however, loosing constraints on human power. Here, while philosophical freewill continued to be denied, practical freewill arose to justify moral and progressive endeavor.

I.B Teleological Necessity

The lineage of mechanical Necessity arises from atomism, nurtured by the Epicureans and Stoics (though nascent in each, the former attempting to revive freewill and the latter claiming a teleology) before being reborn in modern science and the Neo-Stoicism of the Enlightenment. Teleological Necessity, however, Providence and Fate, comes to us through Hebrew theology on the one hand, and

Plato and Aristotle on the other: "Every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or understanding seems to aim at some good" (so Aristotle opens his *Nicomachean Ethics*). Aristotle may have denied creation *ex nihilo*, but never divine purpose. In *The Parts of Animals*, he supposes all Nature "evolves" toward greater form, from potentiality to actuality, ever closer to godly (or Edenic) perfection but, as in the German idealists, never resting, ever becoming. Aristotelean teleological science, however, could not accommodate productive empiricism, which advanced only when discreetly ignored by some in the Renaissance, before finally being refuted in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The great struggle of the Christian apologists at that point, indeed of most of the great seventeenth century minds, became the defense of teleology in the scientific, empirical world. Teleology became the preserve of Christianity and was so when Coleridge took up the Christian apologetic mission. With the exception of Coleridge, the Romantics tried to free teleology from its bondage to Christianity; with the exception of Shelley, all failed.

By "teleological," I refer to all causation proceeding to a definable end, whether or not divine. So Vico, Kant, and Hegel could propose a teleological view of history which did not require (though usually permitted) divine intervention. The concept only requires that all change be necessary and serve an end. As a theory of change teleological Necessity, like mechanical Necessity, could be seen as either predictive and linear (as the necessitarians and reformers hoped), periodic (including cyclical), or unpredictable (leading to resignation and fatalism).

I.C Chance

One of the ironies of the endless disputes over Necessity is that all of the disputants consider the possibility that events proceed by pure chance or randomness as abhorrent. Yet each detects its fatal presence in the system of the other. The necessitarian claims that Necessity and chance alone explain the range of possible causation; that if events (including human decisions) are traceable to a discrete cause or series of causes, then Necessity reigns. If a different event may arise from the same cause or causes, (assuming the will as both effect and cause)

nothing being modified or added, then what else is there but chance to account for the difference? Freewill, then, equates with the uncaused, with chance as randomness. As Shelley announces: "Motive is to voluntary action in the human mind what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance as applied to matter" (note to VI.198 of *QM*). He picked this up from Lord Bacon: "Fortuna nomen rei quae non est,"² and "Qualis causa est fortuna in universo, talis est voluntas in homine."³

Chance, as I have said, mostly exists negatively, as something everyone is eager to deny. The salvation of morality prompted moral philosophers of both sides to brand chance (in the sense of randomness) as illusion. The most complete assault on chance as randomness among the Romantics came from Coleridge, though for him it was more a defense of purpose, using time-tested arguments. First, he took the necessitarian argument that all causation must be Necessity or chance back to the very first cause and concluded that this event could only be divine or chance. If chance, we are left with Epicurean atomism, which tried to explain the "astonishing aptitude and ineffable Beauty of Things from a lucky hit in the Blind Uproar . . ." (*LRR* [1795], Lec. 1; *Works* 1: 98). In the practical world, chance cannot be disproven in individual events, but the grand march of history and the harmony of Nature suggests nothing less than intention.⁴ Second, chance in human affairs subverts morality, crushes the very hope on which the human heart subsists. On the death of his son, Berkeley: "shall we believe that . . . [God] . . . leaves [us] to be trod under by the Hoof of Accident?" (ltr. to his wife, 8 Apr 1799). Like Kant, he could not accept that we were to the divine powers as flies to wanton boys, much less to chance, which was worse. Even Byron needed his gods--malevolent perhaps, but involved. A morally arbitrary universe Byron, though not Coleridge, could believe; one causally arbitrary he could not.

²Chance [as Fortune] is among those things "which do not exist," (*Novum Organum* I.60).

³"What chance is in the universe, so will is in man" (*De Interpretatione Naturae*); both quotations are from Nichol ed. 2: 119.

⁴See also *LRR* Lec 3; *Works* 1: 150.

On the other hand, chance as mechanical or teleological Necessity unperceived had a long history in speculations over causation. The Peripatetic philosopher, Alexander of Aphrodisias (2d century AD), offering perhaps the most complete investigation of Necessity in the ancient world, identifies three causal agencies: Nature, chance, and human will.⁵ Chance may supersede freewill, as when the digging of a garden becomes, by chance, the discovery of buried treasure. This example, borrowed from Aristotle, demonstrates the way in which chance equates with fortune, not as randomness, as uncaused events, but as events only seemingly arbitrary due to human ignorance of all of the circumstances.

Byron's inclination away from hope and progress and toward an indifferent, morally arbitrary universe may be seen in his frequent use of the word "chance." Despite his open flirtation with Epicureanism, even he nonetheless never allows for randomness or luck. "Chance favoured me," admits Gabor in *Werner* (V.1.255). Luck, of course, cannot favor, but lest we think he is simply using a figure of speech, closer investigation of the entire passage shows it deeply in the shadow of teleology. Clearly Gabor is convinced that the events he recounts flow from a higher justice, and he evokes this power five times in little more than a hundred lines (255-362), twice as "chance" and thrice as "fortune." Byron makes the same equation in a letter to Annabella Milbanke: "Chance is more just than we are" (5 Mar 1817), coupling it with "Fortune" and "Nemesis" by association in the text. In the account of the siege of Ismail in *Don Juan*, he tells of "the artillery's hits or misses, / What sages call Chance, Providence, or Fate" (VII.lxxvi, 1822). All are equally "Uncertainty" when viewed from "Humanity's estate." Here he has hit upon it: chance exists as a subset of Fate, specifically referring to that Fate which from the human perspective alone seems random, arbitrary, or luck. We might then see chance as divided into those unexpected events which bring a boon--fortune--and those which bring harm--misfortune.

Mechanical Necessity allowed for no such enthroning of ignorance. The Newtonian universe promised (at least theoretically) that all eventually could become known, and chance as unperceived, unexpected causation be eliminated.

⁵ *On Fate*, sec. iv.

By confirming the place of chance in the world, Byron made the universe no less determined, but denied the humanist hope of ever achieving sufficient knowledge to have power over it. George^s Cuvier treated his catastrophism as mechanical periodization, though with the biblical flood included as the most recent catastrophe in the series, he left at least superficial room for Providence. A history generated entirely by natural law should be predictable, but when periodic and not cyclical (which is by definition predictable), when change is generated by catastrophes, which tend to come on men by surprise, it tends not to be so. The appeal of Cuvier to Byron (see Preface to *Cain*) we may see in part as a confirmation of the disastrous seeming arbitrariness of things, the rule of chance. Like Blake and Coleridge, Byron fought Enlightenment humanism by denying real, efficacious power to men, but his denials included the Christianity they turned to as an alternative. More to his mind was Machiavelli, for whom chance as fortune also helped define man in the world, defining fortune as "the power which acts contrary to [man's] control and therefore capriciously." Byron draws on a tradition of secular pessimism from Sophocles through ancient Stoicism to modern, where it melds with Calvinism.

I.D Freewill

From the beginning, freewill has been assumed as the very life of moral responsibility (i.e. culpability). Yet, equally vital has been a reassurance that Necessity guarantee that ultimate reward or punishment justly follow from good or evil actions. (Religion has answered the failure of life to ensure the latter with the threat and promise of immortality.) These two apparent contradictions meet in basic legal theory, derived from the Aristotelian and Christian ethical assumption that increasingly necessitated pathways of consequences follow from one or more initial free, culpable, acts. This supposes that freewill exists most fully early in our moral development, but that once we have chosen good or evil, then our future choices become increasingly less free, increasingly necessitated. Evil begets more evil and good more good. Neither the classical (humanist) nor Christian tradition allows that Necessity attains such power, even late in our decline or elevation, to deny the possibility of reform or corruption of our ways, but like a runaway vehicle racing down a hillside, it becomes ever more difficult

for the driver to arrest the momentum. Choice becomes tendency which rushes toward Necessity.

Following Locke, the Enlightenment tried to establish an ethics in the absence of assured freewill, a social ethic which avoided the uncertainties of Christian intentionalism (in the wake of centuries of religious wars). Whether or not the will itself was free mattered hardly at all in a utilitarian ethic. Nonetheless, few men could shake free from the conviction that morality resided in the purposes of the heart, so "volition" was pried loose from the will to account for "freedom." Aristotle provides the distinction, voluntary behavior being that "of which the moving principle is the agent itself, he being aware of the particular circumstance of the action;" involuntary behavior is that which takes place "under compulsion or . . . through ignorance . . ." (*Nicomachean Ethics* III.1.2). Blame and punishment he justifies for the first and not for the second.

The Enlightenment debate on freewill mostly raged between its need in anchoring moral culpability (so the Christians argued) and the necessitarian observation of Locke (an unhappy conclusion for him) that freewill seems an agreeable illusion. The volition is free--so man may "act what he wills"--but the will itself is determined--he may not "will . . . what he wills" (Locke, *Essay* 2.21.22). As Hume scoffed: "We feel that our actions are subject to our will on most occasions, and imagine we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing . . ." (*Treatise* 2: 3.2.408).

Both Hume and David Hartley take from Hobbes and Locke two sorts of freewill, a distinction deriving from that between the will and volition: "practical" freewill--the power to act according to the will or motive--and "philosophic" freewill--the power of determining the will itself, or acting against the strongest motive. Virtually all Enlightenment philosophers accepted these terms and most rationalists reluctantly or gleefully accepted that the latter sort seemed to be theoretical only. These two attitudes began to polarize in the late Enlightenment and through the Romantic age. Necessitarians such as Priestley, Godwin, and the prominent French *philosophes* accepted Necessity as a Promethean gift of power to men, power over Nature through science and over their society and themselves through its guarantees of efficacy in reform. But the consequences of

necessitarianism for intentionalist ethics (and most men have always based morality on the heart) was clearly perceived as fatal, and the sacred and secular rallied to oppose it. Kant and the majority of Romantics led the secular revolt.⁶

In asserting the illusion of freewill, necessitarians argued as the Stoic Cleanthes did in his analogy of the dog, tied to a cart since it was a pup. From the beginning it learned the way of the world, the possible and impossible, and its desires were early modified to concord with the idea of always following the cart. Now its will seeks only to travel with the cart, and to this extent it has the freedom to act according to its will. If inexplicably it gets an urge to go another way--if a peasant dreams of being a king--Necessity tugs and dreams vanish. "Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt," as the Stoic, Seneca, said.⁷

In Stoicism we find the exposition of the Platonic suggestion of liberty in obedience, passed on to Christian ethics.

being gifted with reason, man is able to understand . . . strict and universal determination as perfectly rational and salutary. Such knowledge makes him adapt his own intention freely and willingly to whatever providence has ordained him to do. This very act of free assent causes his moral perfection and happiness, for nothing of all that may happen to him can change his state of mind once he has achieved this perfect agreement between his consciousness and nature. . . . (qtd. in Dihle 41)

Diogenes Laertius attributes to Zeno (the Stoic) a conception very Christian (and Romantic) of inner human nature as a reflection of the divine, of the unity of the good and its perception through "right reason," freedom as living in accordance with our own nature, following inclinations which can only be good (*Lives* 7.53ff). Nature herself was rational, that is, harmonious with the mind (as in Hegel). Seneca repeats Cleanthes' allegory of the dog behind the cart, but claims for man more dignity: "non pareo deo, sed adsentior."⁸

⁶Attempts to reconcile the extremes into what we now call "soft determinism" Kant dismissed as "a miserable subterfuge."

⁷"Fate leads the willing, and drags the unwilling" (*Epistulae morales* 107.11).

⁸"not merely to obey God, but to agree with His decisions" (*Epistulae morales* 96).

So, freewill manages to be less than free and determinism less than fully determined. The late Renaissance and the age of science resurrected the atomist, nonteleological determinism as Necessity: "hard" determinism in modern parlance. Not until the German Romantics, however, did the other extreme appear: complete, "existential" freewill. Both extremes tend to presuppose powerlessness: the former in a commonsense way, as fatalism, though necessitarians vehemently deny this; the latter because freedom to act according to one's nature is the only possible kind of freedom, and this kind the will possesses totally. The final age of the possibility of teleology was the Romantic age, and these poets made the last grasp at that hope. Their failure made "existential" freedom possible, but the cost was moral authority and the reassurance of purpose.

CHAPTER II MECHANICAL NECESSITY

II.A Moderate Mechanisms

tout ce qui entre dans l'entendement humain y vient par les sens. .
. . nos premiers maîtres de philosophie sont nos pieds, nos mains,
nos yeux.⁹

Necessity affirmed the simple truth that similar circumstances produced similar results in the empirical world. David Hartley (*Observations on Man*, 1749) applied the spirit of Newton (if not the exactness) to his investigation of the development of the mind and discovered Necessity there as well (a reluctant admission he tells us):

sufficient desire . . . follows the previous circumstances with a rigorous exactness; in like manner the voluntary powers are all generated according to the law of association, which law operates in a mechanical necessary way, and admits of no variations, while the circumstances remain the same. . . . (2.1. prop. 114)

The mind's "circumstances" consisted in the impressions it received from the external world. Association said that "distinct, vivid primary" stimuli would associate in the mind into "distinct, vivid secondary ideas." An external world properly ordered such that pleasurable sensations were linked to virtue and painful sensations to vice assured the indelible inculcation of morals.

Early, Wordsworth concerns himself with affirming the Necessity behind association. In the 1794 additions to "An Evening Walk," for instance, he states as true what he yet lacked the philosophic understanding to have figured out for himself: "From love of Nature, love of Virtue flows / And hand in hand with virtue Pleasure goes" (162-63). Coleridge begins with impressions of familial affections instead of (maternal) Nature, but the mechanism is the same: "the Love

⁹"all that enters the human understanding comes there through the senses. . . . our first teachers of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes" (*Émile*, 1762, 2: 118).

of our Friends, parents and neighbours lead[s] us to the love of our Country to the love of all Mankind" (*Lectures on Revealed Religion*, 1795, lec. 3; *Works* 1: 163). Wordsworth argues in "Expostulation and Reply" (May 1798), supposedly an account of parlor room debates with Hazlitt, how the first impressions begin the necessary process: "The eye--it cannot choose but see; / We cannot bid the ear be still. . . ."

For the development of moral values, the only interest the law of association held for the Romantic poets, two mechanisms were involved: the twin ministers of pleasure and pain and the mind of the newborn a fresh template, a Lockean "tabula rasa." The latter, the belief in the purity of the child's perceptions derives, ironically, from an innate disposition to value children and to idealize simplistically that which we value (aided by a memory which will tend to gild our own childhood). We find this expressed first in Platonic philosophy, then in Christianity, as when the New Testament asks that we come to faith with a child's openness or Dante tells us (Neo-Platonically) that: "Esce di mano a Lui . . . l'anima semplicetta, che sa nulla, / salvo che, mossa da lieto fattore, / volentier torna a ciò che la trastulla."¹⁰ Locke only codified a belief already universal, accepted through the ages by Romantic and un-Romantic alike. So we find it in Burke (*Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1756): "In the morning of our days, when the senses are unworn and tender . . . how lively at that time are our sensations . . ." (Introduction, "On Taste," 25).¹¹

The external world then acts on this impressionable mind with the carrot and stick of pleasure and pain to teach moral values. Belief in this mechanism underlay most Enlightenment developmental theories, as we find it from Pope--"Self-love and reason to one end aspire, / Pain their aversion, pleasure their desire . . ." (*Essay on Man* 2.87-88)--to the utilitarian Bentham's "pleasure and pain," the sovereign and solely "real" "Springs of Action" (*Deontology* 76,

¹⁰"From the hand of God . . . comes forth / the simple soul which . . . [is] ignorant of every measure / but the glad impulse of its joyous Maker . . ." (*Purgatorio* 16.85ff).

¹¹though Burke, like Dante, did not suffer the Rousseauist illusion that pure receptivity was sufficient for virtue. Both men insisted that education inculcate rationality before virtue could be assured.

79). These two agents incorporate themselves into the world of sensations in almost infinite variety. Burke reminds us of their prominent power in the characters of the sublime and beautiful, and reveals for us Wordsworth's Enlightenment roots: "to see nature in those great tho' terrible Scenes . . . fills the mind with grand ideas, and turns the Soul in upon herself" (ltr. to Shackleton, 25 Jan 1745). Or, as Wordsworth says: "images of danger and distress / And suffering, these took deepest hold of me . . ." (*Prelude* 8.211-12).

In *The Prelude*, species of pleasure and pain are scattered in great number and variety, all clamoring their moral message. The virtue impressed in him by "early intercourse / In the presence of sublime and lovely forms / With the adverse principles of pain and joy" (13.145-47) is reinforced by "grandeur and . . . tenderness" (6.676), by "pain and fear" and "happiness" (5.443), and in the crucible of his early development that is book one, they appear in six different varieties in little more than three hundred lines: "I grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (305-06), by the "discipline [of] / Both pain and fear" (439-40), "the characters / Of danger and desire" (497-98), "the impressive discipline of fear, / . . . [and] pleasure . . . So frequently repeated" (631-33), in "scenes, / . . . beauteous and majestic" (635-36). They form a dialectic of Enlightenment optimism (Wordsworth denies pain to be an evil--13.148-49), two agents in a divine universe working together to produce the virtuous mind. They represent, in Wordsworth as in the Enlightenment, the extreme poles of experience and as such are meant to stand in for experience itself, for the totality of life (Keats' "Vale of Soul-making").

In his anxiety to make psychology scientific, Hartley described this Necessity of development of virtue in seven steps: Sensation, Imagination (Coleridge's "fancy"), Ambition (nascent self-interest), Self-Interest, Sympathy (benevolence arising from its antithesis), Theopathy (arising naturally from love of man), and Moral Sense (disinterested benevolence as the necessary product of the love of God), where virtue has now become habit. In some rejected drafts for book eight of *The Prelude* (MS Y, Oct 1804), we uncover Wordsworth's own attempt to propose a necessary ascent:

1. Full Receptivity (4-14). The mind of the newborn gathers impressions with "delight" and "eagerness," naturally, "uninvited," while its will cannot

- interfere ("torpid").
2. Selective Receptivity (15-34). The "familiar . . . agitate us less," and we begin to make judgements of things of greater worth (e.g. the filial bond).
 3. The Roots of Faith (35-62). From these judgements, the mind begins to distinguish the transient from the eternal, a power the infant gladly did not need, and seek its own lessons (e.g. "Home at Grasmere"). Here the soul begins to journey home.
 4. The Turn from Nature to Man (63-124). Still a youth, familiarity breeds a "less passionate regard" for the sublime and beautiful of Nature, beginning to seek the same in things of the human imagination (e.g. books and poetry). These in themselves are not bereft of moral lessons, but most of us grow enamoured of the "fanciful" and "Untutored minds stop here."
 5. Hubris and the Assertion of the Will (125-36). Only men of talent or will arrive here (e.g. the Byronic hero). The mind has become "unawed" and "Careless of Nature," seeing itself as "Centre and soul of all." The favored youth alone may pass this willful stage, one where Wordsworth saw himself as shipwrecked in his 1796 "crisis of moral questions." He now sees it as a necessary cathartic (as in "Nutting," where the very presence of his wiser self looming narratively over the poem assures us that this orgy of self-gratification will come to good ultimately.¹²)
 6. The Return to Sensitivity (137ff). The most highly favored being (Keats' "Men of Achievement," Shelley's "Poets"), with a childhood in Nature and a superior "constitution," will see "his powers advance," will again be able to commune with the infinite: "The converse which he holds is limitless . . . he looks . . . Through the entire abyss of things." "In speculation he is like a child," having enjoyed a "second birth."¹³ His mind and the universe again know a harmony, "each . . . worthy of the other," and he has arrived at a true disinterested virtue, his "inveterate power / Directed to best ends. . . ." The associative end is achieved: "Namely to make those gracious charities, / Habits"

It was William Godwin who bequeathed Hartley's associative theory to the Romantics. In Godwin, we find the final Enlightenment marriage of mechanical Necessity, association, and social millenarianism. The interior workings of the mind link in a mechanical, that is, "scientific" way, with the Newtonian universe, as Shelley describes for us:

The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch

¹²He takes a more tempered attitude than St. Augustine did over a similar episode with pears; the parallel is close enough, however, to suspect Wordsworth's account, to glimpse perhaps a didactic rather than historical tale here.

¹³Exactly the terms Goethe used in praising the natural spirit of the poetic will he thought he saw in Byron.

That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of Nature.
(*QM* 2.103ff)¹⁴

Coleridge claims in 1804 that Wordsworth, at one time, "was even to Extravagance a Necessitarian" (ltr. to Poole, 15 Jan), but it is significant that Wordsworth, ever the confessor, never makes this admission of himself, neither concerning Godwin nor Necessity. Given this, and that most of Godwin's major themes may be found in previous British (to say nothing of French) philosophy, it follows that his brief infatuation with certain rationalist (perhaps necessitarian) doctrines was not necessarily Godwinian. In appendix one, I offer a detailed re-examination of the evidence behind Wordsworth's reputed Godwinism.

In the period in question for these two poets, 1793-96, we do have a confession of faith from Coleridge, where, in a letter to Southey (11 Dec 1794), he calls himself "a compleat Necessitarian." Shelley, of course, would shout his allegiance from the rooftops: "Necessity! thou mother of the world!" (*QM* VI.198). They defined their terms differently, however, for Coleridge was thinking of Priestleyan optimistic Necessity and Shelley of Godwinism. Yet in each case, their Necessity included Hartley's association mechanism, for Necessity as merely the power of physical causation, abstracted from its role in human moral development, interested them not at all. Byron, of course, could hardly have cared less about mechanisms of human development, and Keats only in a desultory way. None of these concepts appear in Byron, not even worth a satiric jab. Keats bothers himself only to lampoon association in a letter to Reynolds (3 May 1818), calling it a "pretty peal of Chimes," and make one slightly dismissive offhand comment on his friend Charles Wentworth Dilke's rabid Godwinism. Given the proximity of Shelley to each poet (Keats appearing almost sycophantic at times to the Hunt crowd of Godwinians), they both demonstrate remarkable ennui on the subject. Of course, Godwinism enjoyed little favor in a world too long bludgeoned with French ideology. Besides, neither were philosophical nor

¹⁴see also 238ff and *PU* I.298-99.

dedicated reformers, and both were of a temperament to find Shelley's very volubility tiresome or threatening.

Hartley had concluded that the association of ideas, the Necessity manipulating the sensations of pleasure and pain in a receptive mind, had millennial possibilities, had "a Tendency to reduce the State of those who have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, back again to a paradisaal one" (1: 83). Godwin merged this potential with humanist optimism (the Enlightenment victory of the "moderns") for the present and continuing progress of society. Though no teleological optimist--at one point calling man's performance up to now as "a vast abortion" (*PJ* 4.11; Carter ed. 92)--he enjoyed the worship of the early Romantics for his assurances of future "perfectibility." He used the term ambiguously in the first edition of *Political Justice* (1793), perhaps intentionally courting hope, but found himself forced to rein in the millennial implications in subsequent editions, defining it in 1796 as "every perfection or excellence that human beings . . . are competent to conceive . . ." (1.5.58). His *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon* (1801) comes as a further sobering of the vision down to "the progressive nature of man. . . ."

Still, this reflected better the overall tone of *Political Justice*, one that for all its millenarian implications and ethical severity remained deeply soaked in Enlightenment Neo-Stoic detachment:

He . . . who regards all things past, present, and to come, as links of an indissoluble chain, will . . . find himself assisted to surmount the tumult of passion; and be enabled to reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the same clearness of perception, . . . firmness of judgement, and . . . constancy of temper, as we are accustomed to do upon the truths of geometry. (*PJ* 4.8.174)

Yet, we know Godwinism today only in terms of failed extremism. Godwin found himself an Enlightenment man broken on the cusp of a new age; he wrote *Political Justice* just as humanist confidence (among intellectuals) was passing its peak. Much in Godwin struck the very next generation as fatally naive. So vast a psychological gulf was the Terror, that many of the contemporaries of Byron more closely share a view of man with the twentieth century than with the generation

just preceding them. The Enlightenment "Englishness" of Godwin remains for me his most salient characteristic. We must remember how very rational, how unenthusiastic his work actually was, that neither his book nor his most radical devotees would have raised an eyebrow in France or Germany. Masquerading conservatives like Wordsworth and Coleridge hardly earned the label "Jacobin" by any but English standards, so neither had to drift very far from their deeper nature to find themselves in the company of Godwin (and in trouble with the government).

This same standard Shelley later picked up and rushed forward into the Balaklava of a reactionary age. But even he was only a firebrand in the English climate and in the darker world after Napoleon. Shelley, the evangelical atheist, could write of a social Necessity (behind liberty) with the prophetic passion of Coleridge on Providence: "o'er the fell corpse of a dread Tyrant bending, / Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore, / Plants liberty's flag on the slave-peopled shore . . ." (ltr. to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, 6 Jan 1811). But as he sought a social image of the religious devotion exhorted by Coleridge, this was not the voice he preferred. He who could call the people to "Rise like lions after slumber / In unvanquishable number" would rather convince people in a Godwinian manner, by reason and discussion:

Popular insurrections and revolutions I look upon with discountenance. *If such things must be*, I will take the side of the People; but my reasonings shall endeavor to ward it from the hearts of the Rulers of the Earth, deeply as I detest them." (ltr. to Elizabeth Hitchener, 7 Jan 1812)

He sounds, in fact, very like Byron here in his letters to John Cam Hobhouse discussing his attitude to revolution in Britain. Like Coleridge, Shelley often spoke with a voice echoing biblical prophetic thunder, but he did so only as a warning. He addressed the powerful, not the public; he no more intended that his fiery rhetoric should inflame the people than did Coleridge. Each warned of a Necessity as Nemesis; they imagined themselves as oracles of coming restitution, not causes.

Rather, when any of these poets actually directed their words or thoughts toward encouraging action among the people, all retired into native caution. In

his "Address to the Irish People," at the height of his radical efforts, Shelley concedes that "we ^can expect very little amendment in our own time" and that "reform ought to begin at home" (I: 248, 250). Likewise, Coleridge's reputation as a young radical arose from the need of his contemporaries and subsequent scholars to enlist men under pre-existing banners, to clarify by expedient simplicities. The contentious remarks of a man adhere to his name forever while moderate words go unremembered. When Coleridge intended that his words counsel the actual reformers, this from *The Watchman* was more typical:

The Anarchists are indefatigable in seducing the minds of the multitude by preaching up doctrines, which will be true when they are practicable:--that is, when the majority of men are perfectly wise and virtuous. This happy period will not be accelerated by inculcating dispositions to rapine: and a system, which could not subsist a month except under the widely-diffused influence of Love and Knowledge, must be raised on a nobler basis than the rage and envy of the ignorant. (no. 8, 27 Apr 1796, "Foreign Intelligence;" *Works* 2: 288)

Coleridge preferred the pious tranquillity of Christian optimism (though Priestley was no pietist) to Godwin's moderate, but still activist, humanism ("proud" Coleridge called it). For Coleridge, with Necessity as the hands of a benign God, he can exceed even the Godwinians in "subdued sobriety," for which "a practical faith in the doctrine of philosophic necessity seems the only preparative" (*Conciones*; *Works* 1: 49).

II.A.1 The Dream

[F]ew persons but those who have lived in it can conceive or comprehend what the memory of the French Revolution was, nor what a visionary world seemed to open upon those who were just entering it. Old things seemed passing away, and nothing was dreamt of but the regeneration of the human race. (ltr. of Southey to Caroline Bowles, 13 Feb 1824).

Tom Wedgwood, brother of the more famous John and Josiah Wedgwood

decided to employ his wealth in the creation of a genius.¹⁵ Overlooking the casual hubris and self-congratulating beneficence of the idle rich, we see the power Locke and Hartley offered to social reform. Wedgwood was shadowed by no doubt that a child could be made into whatever sort of adult its earliest impressions determined it to be. He writes to Godwin:

My aim is high. I have been endeavouring some masterstroke which would anticipate . . . the progress of human improvement. . . . Let us suppose ourselves in possession of a detailed statement of the first twenty years of the life of a genius; what a chaos of perceptions! . . . How many hours, days, months have been prodigally wasted in unproductive occupation! How many false and contradictory ideas imprinted by authority!

He theorized that the earliest surroundings for the newborn (any healthy newborn would do) "should be to simplify and render intense the first affections of Sense . . . under every possible favourable circumstance of pleasure." Specifically, "Should not the nursery, then, have plain, grey walls with one or two vivid objects for sight and touch? Could not the children be made to acquire manipulation sooner?" Isolation from a corrupting world is common to all utopian schemes: "The Child must never go out of doors or leave his own apartment." So much for the ministry of Nature. So much too for natural impulses; the emphasis is Enlightenment Stoicism: "connect their chief pleasure with rational objects" and avoid "romping, tickling and fooling," which results in even the finest adult minds wasting "some hours every day . . . in reverie, thought ungoverned, undirected. . . ." Rather, "How astonishingly the powers and produce of the mind would be increased by a fixed habit of earnest thought. This is to be given."

Wedgwood suggested Wordsworth as a possible instructor for the child, and we are brought up short. One wonders if he had actually read any of the poems of this musing naturalist. Wedgwood's scheme could hardly be more uncongenial to Wordsworth, even in his rationalist, half-sensationalist years. He visited Wordsworth at Alfoxden in September 1797 and very possibly discussed the plan

¹⁵I am indebted to Moorman, I: 333ff, for this story and these quotations.

at this time. If so, Wordsworth's response is not known, but Wedgwood's opinion of the poet notably declined from that point. Wordsworth's biographer, Moorman, believes that the harsh blasts at unnatural, rationalist education in *The Prelude* must have had Wedgwood in mind. Wordsworth asks rhetorically of Coleridge:

Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend,
If we, in lieu of wandering, as we did
Through heights and hollows, and bye-spots of tales
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures rang'd at will!
Had been attended, follow'd, watch'd, and noos'd,
 . . . like a stalled Ox shut out
From touch of growing grass. . . .
(*Prelude* 5.233ff)

The inclinations of the child, if not always the adult, are holy; the soul will always seek its natural food, its summum bonum.

Lest I leave the field totally in possession of Rousseau and the Romantics, where Wedgwood only speculated, Wordsworth actually was given a child with which to experiment. Wedgwood had been directed to the Wordsworths by the somewhat dissolute Basil Montagu, whose own child had been turned over to Dorothy and William a few years before. With the Wordsworths, little Basil Montagu enjoyed the full measure of a Rousseauist upbringing, as Dorothy relates to a friend, Jane Marshall: "Till a child is four years old he needs no other companions, than the flowers, the grass, the cattle, the sheep . . . the pebbles on the road" (ltr., 3 Jul 1798). To Mrs. William Rawson, she affirms: "We teach him nothing . . . but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability" (ltr., 19 Mar 1797). Simultaneously, within the same daily company, Coleridge was applying similar thinking to his own boy, Hartley (whose very name confirms the theories inflicted on him). We recall his taking the child out to experience the moon in "Frost at Midnight" (1798). We see William attempting to comprehend flaws appearing in the character of little Basil in "Anecdote for Fathers" (subtitled "How lying may be taught," this for a child which Wordsworth had to admit "lies like a little devil" [ltr. to Wrangham, 7 Mar 1796]). Yet, as we might expect, it was all so mistaken. Young Basil grew into an adult rotten with

insecurity and vindictiveness, a pattern replicated in the besotted Hartley Coleridge.

But my topic here is hope, not yet its inevitable futility and fatuousness. Its foundation and power is Necessity, and Hartley (David) tells us of its advantages:

First . . . It entirely removes the great difficulty of reconciling the prescience of God with the free-will of man. . . .

Secondly, It has a tendency to beget the most profound humility and self-annihilation. . . .

Thirdly, It has a tendency to abate all resentment against men. . . .

Fourthly, It greatly favours the doctrine of universal restoration. Since all that is done is by the appointment of God, it cannot but end well at last.

Fifthly, It has a tendency to make us labour more earnestly with ourselves and others, particularly children, from the greater certainty attending all endeavours that operate in a mechanical way.

Lastly, There are many well-known passages of scripture, which cannot be reconciled to the doctrine of philosophical free-will, without the greatest harshness of interpretation.

(*Obsv.*, "Conclusion," 1.302)

Developmental theory stood on the fifth point, Coleridge's optimism on the fourth, and Godwin's (and Shelley's) unhappiness with punishment on the third.

The product of such a doctrine, ignited by a young man's hopes, can be startling: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!" An absolute power, like Necessity, encourages extremes either of optimism or pessimism depending on the perceived source and benignity of that power. In a humanist world, with that power controllable by man, great hopes were unleashed (the potential for great evil less readily recognized). The ideas were English but the passion French. In an address to the Sorbonne on 11 December 1750, Turgot, albeit cautiously, introduced the notion of perfectibility before Rousseau even had coined the term:

les moeurs s'adoucissent l'esprit humain s'éclaire . . . et la masse totale du genre humain par de^salternatives de calme et d'agitation, de biens et de maux, marche toujours, quoique à pas lents, à une perfection plus grande.¹⁶

Necessity promised secular thinkers the gift of the gods. "Providence," like "Prometheus," means "foresight," and both terms assume that the ability to see the future is the greatest of divine powers (hence the authority of prophets and oracles). Laplace held the sceptre of Necessity when he announced that "If I knew enough I could predict (and retrodict) the entire course of events in the universe." Shelley reiterates that "those who know . . . Nature . . . [can] deduce / The future from the present . . ." (*QM* 3.100-01). So did he subtitle the first version of *The Revolt of Islam* (*Laon and Cythna*) as "The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century." The claims of Necessity could hardly be higher and justified the correspondingly lofty hopes: "Tear thou that gloomy shroud" of Time to reveal "Hope . . . beaming through the mists of fear . . ." (8.9-13).

The English, though, balked at the complete overthrow of religion, which meant that perfectibilist hopes took the form of Christian optimism. This dominated English thought between Hobbes (who deserves credit for generating much eighteenth-century philosophy simply out of an eagerness to refute him) and Byron. The great English optimist of the latter Enlightenment was Priestley, justly honored for his clear thinking and forthright prose:

It seems to be the uniform intention of divine providence, to lead mankind to happiness in a progressive, which is the surest, though the slowest method. Evil always leads to good, and imperfect to perfect. (*Essay on the First Principles of Government* 139-42; qtd. in Coleridge *Works* 1: 108n)

The very notion of Providence demands that,

every generation in posterity will be as much superior to us in political, and in all kinds of knowledge, and that they will be able

¹⁶"manners are gradually softened, the human mind is enlightened . . . and the total mass of the human race, by alternating between calm and agitation, good and bad, marches always, however slowly, towards perfection" (*Oeuvres* 1: 215-16).

to improve upon the best civil and religious institutions that we can prescribe for them. . . . (187; *Works* 1: lxii).

Coleridge's optimism followed suit--"every event however calamitous is the necessary mean of the best possible end" (*LRR*, lec. 5; *Works* 1: 196)--and he did not shy from applying it like a cane to the ever-tolerant Southey: "However wickedly you might act, God will make it ULTIMATELY the best" (ltr., 13 Nov 1795).

Still, Coleridge was something of an anachronism among radical youth. For most, for whom passions ran high for Christian morality, but not for the church and its theology, Godwin offered a disinterested benevolence, a familiar Christian ethic rerobed in secular analytical reason. He set himself in vocal opposition to the self-love moralists, which he characterized as French, perhaps in an attempt to obscure the perceived tricolor tinge of his own philosophy, though his real target was the lineage of Hobbes, Locke, Paley, and Adam Smith: "If self-love be the only principle of action, there can be no such thing as virtue" (*PJ* 4.10.183). His student disciples could not but have been pleased to join in the vilification of the "Paley" establishment at Cambridge. In its place, Godwin offered a quasi-religious utilitarianism, a disinterested "duty," or "that mode of action on the part of the individual, which constitutes the best possible application of his capacity to the general benefit" (*PJ* 2.4.83). Godwin did not venture so far toward a religion as to establish an intentionalist ethic, based on the motives of the heart; he was too secular and too much of the Enlightenment for that: "Intention is of no further value than as it leads to utility: it is the means, and not the end" (*PJ* 2.4.83).¹⁷

True disinterestedness requires love but does not allow that love to be selective; we must love all men, none more than others. This brings us to the famous case of Archbishop Fénelon and his maid, Godwin insisting that morality demands that in case of fire he must save the good Archbishop first, being of greater worth to the world, even if the maid were Godwin's own mother. Once

¹⁷Kant, also seeking a morality which would inspire devotion, well knew it had to be intentionalist (Hume had admitted as much) and his "Achtung" was securely so.

out of favor, abuse showered on Godwin for this severity, for his undervaluing of the familial affections in general, but I suspect that a severe moral stricture actually attracts people in search of a new or surrogate religion. Kant, after all, argued that morality meant that a man must never lie, even to a murderer in search of the hiding place of his mother. Kant knew he was asking the impossible, but so does Christ in asking the ultimate: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Men need a vision of the unreachable as much as they do the reassurance that they might progress at least some way toward it.

Shelley knew this most of all, and he dedicated his poetry to quasi-religious idealisms so that men might be inspired. He took Godwin's disinterested doctrine most to heart and promulgated it with vigor:

Love, the Love which we worship--Virtue, Heaven,
disinterestedness--in a word, Friendship . . . that which seeks the
good of all . . . because it . . . is capable of abstracting self, and
loving Virtue for Virtue's own loveliness, desiring the happiness of
others *not* from the obligation of fearing Hell or desiring Heaven,
but for pure simple unsophisticated Virtue. (ltr. to Hitchener, 11
Nov 1811)

We see how easily an essentially consequentialist ethic vaporizes into a largely intentionalist one, while yet retaining the illusion of its former form. Shelley attempted to practice a stoic moral discipline which Godwin only preached. So when Hogg, his best friend, attempts to seduce Harriet, his new wife, he upbraids him for his falling into self-interest. Had he dispassionately considered the interests of others, of the many, before his own? His fault lay only in that he had not, a behavioral fault blamed from an intentionalist perspective.

Godwin had not mistaken his audience. In his "Reminiscences," Crabb Robinson recalls a moment of quasi-religious conversion in the revelation that was *Political Justice*.¹⁸ Shelley recounts a moment outside of his schoolroom when, on his knees, eyes streaming for the evils of the world, when he dedicates his life to disinterested benevolence: "I spake:--'I will be wise, / And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies / Such power. . . .' I then controlled / My tears, my heart

¹⁸*Diary I*: 3.32. Quoted in appendix I. Note again, however, that Robinson translates disinterestedness into vaguely intentionalist terms.

grew calm, and I was meek and bold" ("Dedication" to *R of I*). Granting him vast dramatic licence, perhaps even complete fabrication,¹⁹ this revelatory tale has made his point. The text of *Queen Mab* argues strongly his dedication to Godwin, as do his letters, where he prostrates himself with the Romantic's most exalted tribute, a supplication typically reserved for transcendental powers: "like the tenderest and wisest of parents" (ltr. to Godwin, 7 Jul 1812). He tells Godwin of his conversion, of a vow to celibacy from idle pleasures. From *Political Justice*, "I rose . . . a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance. . . . I beheld, in short, that I had duties to perform" (10 Jan 1812). And despite the wear of years of disappointment, he never entirely abandoned that youth on the coast of Wales, launching into the bay dark-green bottles and waterproofed boxes fitted with sails, containing copies of "A Declaration of Rights" and "The Devil's Walk."

Generally, it seems that the cause of social progress was better served with Necessity only vaguely teleological--too little and chance (uncertainty) leaked in; too strongly purposeful and the demands of religion, whose powerfully individualistic morality militates against social perfectibility, come to dominate. Shelley balances Newton and moral imperative in his conception of Necessity: "No atom of this turbulence fulfils / A vague and unnecessitated task, / Or acts but as it must and ought to act" (*QM* 6.171ff). All the metaphysics, the Neo-Platonism Wordsworth indulged in, served to empower Necessity (associationism) with just enough teleology, enough suggestion of divine parentage, to ensure Necessity remained moral: "A motion and a spirit, that impels. . . ." I capitalize "Necessity" precisely to suggest this greater purposefulness than a mere mechanism, to league it with such powers as Providence, Nemesis, and Fate (though obviously all are not equally teleological). When Hazlitt remarks of the lines just quoted from "Tintern Abbey" that "Perhaps, the doctrine of . . . philosophical necessity was never more finely

¹⁹but this is the nature of all revelation. Factual accuracy means little; "truth" lies in the sincerity of the subsequent devotion.

expressed than in these lines. . . ."²⁰ we recognize how teleological the old Enlightenment mechanism had become among the Romantics. The Germans were already there; Schelling arrived at the identical notion without employing Hartley: there is "a power by which we, even in our free activity, without our knowledge, and even against our wills, realize our goals unawares."²¹ So long as they needed to affirm a transcendent power, be it Shelley's Necessity or Coleridge's Providence, they must allow some traffic across the Cartesian divide. Wordsworth gives Hartley wings:

A Gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man; invisibly
It comes, directing those to works of love
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.
(*Prelude* 5.515ff)

And Shelley may have been the most religious of them all, his "atheism" being only a rejection of established theodicies. His eschatology remained Christian in all but name; in fact, freed of Christian theology, he could take his millenarian vision to an even higher ether (e.g. *QM* VIII.199ff).

Keats appears here, though no more a necessitarian than a Christian, with a concept of destiny with selfsame teleological implications. In the passing of the Titans (*Hyperion*), Keats offers a view of progress that partakes of the deistic universe, optimism, Providence, and wishful invention, just the sort of thing that an agnostic, fishing about for an optimistic alternative to Providence, might come up with. Oceanus, the voice of ultimate authority, the great Neo-Platonic symbol of eternity, rises to address the vanquished gods with a Stoic creed: "We fall by course of Nature's law, not force / Of thunder, or of Jove" (2.181ff). He reminds Saturn: "as thou wast not the first of powers, / So art thou not the last . . ." and he describes a world in a steady process of refinement:

Mark well!
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;

²⁰"On the Doctrine of Philosophic Necessity," *Examiner*, 10 Dec 1815; *Works* 20: 60.

²¹*Werke* 3: 616; qtd. in Hirsch 109.

And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
 In form and shape compact and beautiful,
 In will, in action free . . .
 So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
 A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 And fated to excel us. . . .
 'tis the eternal law
 That first in beauty should be first in might:
 Yea, by that law, another race may drive
 Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
 (2.205-31)

He gives us a Necessity Miltonic in more than style, one where freewill is pointedly affirmed (i.e. gratuitous in this context) to show freewill and unshakable purpose inexplicably co-habitant, irreconcilables married by power of poetic fiat. By this he stresses that he speaks not of an Enlightenment mechanism, and since we know enough of Keats not to posit a Christian Providence, we are left with a Great Unexplained, a sublimity impelling the progress of beauty and truth only because Keats would have it so.

The question remained of where the efforts of reform should be directed, either improving society from which an improved man will emerge, or improving the individual and thus the society. Associationism will support either approach, but in France as well as Britain, commonsense sensationalism had motivated most Enlightenment thinkers to pursue (socialist) theories on the reform of society, the environment in which the mind will develop. Perhaps this gained favor in that secular age from being the opposite of the religious effort. Enlightenment social reform was a need impressed on millions of minds across Europe, more concerned with the rights of men than were the English Romantic poets, by the tread of French armies. It was their momentum which rushed most powerfully into the modern age. Empowering the social metamorphosis wrought by the Victorians, the belief that improving a society will subsequently produce moral men has endured in modern communist and socialist creeds.

Obviously, however, the new religiousness of the Romantics represents a reaction against this Enlightenment humanism. Among my five, only Shelley lingers long regarding the reform of society as the first priority. In his discussions with Southey at Keswick virtually the only matter on which they managed to agree was that "the prejudices of education, and sinister influence of political

institutions [are] adequate to account for all the Specimens of vice . . ." (ltr. to Hitchener, 2 Jan 1812). But, on this issue at least, both men stood closer to the mass of practical reformers than to their fellow poets.

Southey certainly saw the Pantisocracy scheme as reform from the outside in, from the perfected society to the perfected man. Coleridge, on the other hand, saw it purely as an intentionalist: the settlers must arrive at the colony already purified or all was futile. Throughout his anguished letters to Southey on this subject runs the assumption that the scheme was "impregnable, supposing the assigned quantum of virtue and genius in the first individuals" (ltr. to Southey, Autumn 1794). He fussed over the suspected deficiencies in virtue of some of the women and children proposed for the colony, and Southey's insensitive proposal to bring his servant collapsed the whole idea.

While Coleridge can publish opinions to the effect that "all Vices arise immediately or remotely from political inequality" (*LRR*, lec. 2; *Works* 1: 134), exactly as does Shelley, he does not mean to direct his reform efforts there. His principles "were Christian, for they demanded the direct reformation & voluntary act of each Individual prior to any change in his outward circumstances . . ." (ltr. to the Beaumonts, 1 Oct 1803). The point here is Christian and indelibly Coleridge: evil is exterior (though it may arise from external circumstances aided by inner, original corruption), an excrescence, while virtue, can only come from the heart.

Internal reform is his theme: "That general illumination should precede revolution, is a truth as obvious, as that the vessel should be cleansed before we fill it with a pure liquor" ("Political Lecture at Bristol," 1795; *Works* 4; 1.334). When even young Coleridge, in the 1790s, argues in Enlightenment, humanist terms about the education and the inculcation of values, he defines them differently: they meant knowledge, he means faith; they meant education, he means revelation.

We, of course, need have no uncertainty about the nature of his internal reform. "Go, preach the GOSPEL to the Poor," he challenged from the pulpit of *Conciones ad Populum* (1795), as if this were nothing more than the palliative for

repression that the Gospels have always been. Twenty years later, in *The Statesman's Manual* (the "manual" advocated being the Bible), both the intended audience (Godwin's audience, the middle and upper classes) and the message remained the same: "The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight" (title page).

from the very outset I hoped in no advancement of humanity but from individual minds & morals working onward from Individual to Individual--in short, from the *Gospel*--. This . . . I declared, in my 23d year: and to this I adhere in my present 63d. Liberty without Law [inner moral law] can exist no where. . . . (ltr. to Dr. De Prati, 29 Oct 1833)

Even Shelley had to come around to the Romantic insistence on the heart, on the social following necessarily only from the individual. While his public pronouncements as a young liberal, like Coleridge's, often hectored the world on the need to reform society to allow for individual potential to blossom--"Eldest of things, divine Equality! / Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee . . ." (*R of I* V.xlix)--in reflection he would speak more frankly about his doubts for progress without remaking the man.

II.A.2 Contradictions

Hope grows fat on self-consumption and blinds itself the more it feeds. It vainly tries to fill the ever-emptying gulf of personal emotional needs, shouldering all else aside in its desperate gambit. It led my three erstwhile social reformers into troublesome contradictions. As the vital mechanism of hope, Necessity bonded together otherwise hostile doctrines into uneasy alliance. It enjoyed immunity from attack in a rational age by being logically unassailable, and in a Protestant culture by expedient marriage to doctrines of Providence and predestination. Then, necessitarians from Hartley to Godwin revived the Stoic offering of Necessity as the natural midwife to a feeling of benevolence and virtue, either replacing Christian ethics or being incorporated into it.

Though Coleridge was to occupy much of his mature life struggling over competing demands of Necessity and freewill, Wordsworth, never the philosopher,

bothered only once over this issue. Mostly, he would plod along in a torpor of assumed determinism, raise his head on occasion resolutely to assert freewill, then resume his slumber. Even Coleridge, in the early years, slept happily with the serpent that he later saw Necessity to be, satisfied with it as the machinery and proof of Providence. The doctrine of Necessity helped to generate hope, giving life to a potential in man lacking other assurance. Shelley arrived with hope already aflame, but finding in mechanical Necessity the contact with practical power, the causal engine his hope needed.

In France, the purity of liberty and egalitarianism became corrupted by an unholy alliance with surging nationalism, a contrary force of separation and value distinction, and later in Germany the same happened in opposition to the French. From Herder's desire that the idea of a unique German culture be taken seriously, to Fichte's patriotic claims of superiority for it, Romanticism found itself wedded to a contradiction it never lost. Wordsworth, the exponent of the universal human heart, implies in *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* that each nation must look to its own national character, that the French for example must not learn of human truths from the British. As the Enlightenment may be partially the product of a horror of the religious wars and persecutions of the seventeenth century, so does the Romantic age represent a sliding back into distinctions and inevitable value judgements, into truth again left to its "wilderer fancies" in the conspiratorial shadows of the heart. Rousseau, for whom qualitative judgements represent man's first Fall, had not intended this.

Godwin represents the last credible attempt to reconcile the forward-rushing youth of materialism and the matronly spirit of self-evident morality. He promised a synthesis in a future of disinterested benevolence, but when the Romantics pretended to follow his materialism they only deceived themselves. Science could never be as inductive as it pretended, but Newton and his conscientious followers still had tried to approach the world, cap in hand, to believe what it would tell them. From Bacon we learned to assume nothing but order and coherence. Even Hartley, though inadequate to the task of applying science to psychology, at least approached it in this spirit, his Christianity, like Newton's, standing discreetly back from his best work. And the *Observations on Man* proved immensely fruitful of further ideas. The Romantics, however, sought

to make empiricism toil in the service of a legion of *a priori* assumptions, then discarded it when it proved unruly.

Priestley believed that God and moral certainty could rule over a materialist universe, but Richard Price wisely argued otherwise in their courtly debate over Necessity and freewill. Godwin knew that he could not retain the spiritual element, but held firmly to the Christian ethic. The son of a pastor and possessed by a nature deeply in need of a higher moral authority, Coleridge arrived at Necessity as a believing Christian. He sought only for philosophic confirmation of Providence, and found it in Necessity and the optimism of Hartley and Priestley. He pleads with Southey: "I would ardently, that you were a Necessitarian, and (believing in an all-loving Omnipotence) an Optimist" (ltr., 29 Dec 1794). When he calls God, "That being, who is 'in will, in deed, Impulse of all to all,'" making all things "ultimately the best" (ltr. to Southey, Oct 1795), he suggests, perhaps unconsciously, a synthesis central to his early thought. Here it is thesis = God, antithesis = mechanical Necessity, with the polar extremes meeting in synthesis = optimism. Kant proposed a synthesis of thesis = existence, antithesis = possibility, with a synthesis = Necessity. One link between these occurs in Shelley, where the Absolute (God as pure possibility) manifests itself in the Universal Mind (existence) as Necessity (e.g. Demogorgon, the West Wind, etc). But Kant was offering the familiar Christian synthesis, one Coleridge came to adopt rather later, of the Trinity: the Son (corporeality, or existence) and the Holy Ghost (spirituality, or possibility) uniting in the Father (totality). Ironically in Coleridge, the years of greatest necessitarianism were years of professed Unitarianism, but this only reconfirms how essentially unreflective he had been. Patton and Mann, editors of Coleridge, observe this careless attitude in *Lectures on Revealed Religion* (1795), in a contradiction between his optimism and his conviction of the corrosive nature of evil: "In the course of his lectures Coleridge moves from one view to the other, according to whether the context of his remarks is theological . . . or political . . ." (*Works* 1: lxiii).

Free from doctrinal compromises, Shelley revealed Necessity in its full implications for atheism, a doctrine it served as happily as Christian optimism. Note twelve of *Queen Mab* hammers on the pillars not only of Christianity ("the same arguments which prove that God is the author of food, light, and life, prove

Him also the author of poison, darkness, and death"), but of anthropomorphic theism in general (to attribute moral qualities "to the principle of the universe is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature"). Thus is mechanical Necessity confirmed as a moral anarchy. He rode Necessity as far as it could take him in bashing the very religious authority Coleridge employed it to support, to "stripping Power of its darkest mask . . ." (*Phil. View of Reform*, 1820).

But Godwinian rationalism left an unliving body. The very heart of religion lies not in its ethic, but in the emotional succor of its theology. Rousseau comes to recognize this only indirectly, but inevitably. In *Discours sur les arts and les sciences*, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, and *Du contrat social*, he appears to stand foursquare for progress and perfectibility, yet his assumptions on the nature of society and the costs of the social contract vitiate hope of real possibility. He cannot be said to be a votary of progress or of his own concept of "perfectionner" for the very reason he presaged Romanticism: his quasi-religious emphasis on the moral authority of the individual heart. Coleridge and Wordsworth play the tragic part in the slow development of this realization.

II.B Gathering Doubts

II.B.1 Rationalism Escaped

All discussion of the Romantics must begin with them as children of the Enlightenment. The inevitable current of opposition through the eighteenth century--religious enthusiasm, naturalism, and gothic and sentimental taste--only affirmed the reign of the goddess of Reason. Even philosophic challenges to reason--Berkeley, Hume, and Kant--were rational investigations conducted by eminently reasonable men. Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1692) had marched reason across the border into faith and claimed sovereignty. Revelation, Locke claimed, must be confirmed by reason or it was little more than "the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain" (4.1.2). None of my poets ever challenged the Newtonian universe, the truths and efficacy of empirical science, in the phenomenal world.

Reason had always been of two sorts. Analytic reason is the rationality normally referred to by the term, the dispassionate faculty of Locke, Newton and the Age of Reason. The French philosophes and revolutionaries had crowned this reason as empress, the mother of Liberty, the bearer of Enlightenment hopes never stronger than in the dying blaze of these hopes in Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft: "in all cases morals must be fixed on immutable principles; and . . . the being cannot be termed . . . virtuous, who obeys any authority but that of reason" (*Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 13.6.191). Higher than this was Right Reason, of Platonism and Christianity, the direct perception of the truth. Actually, it is revelation, called reason since Plato's early usurpation of the authority of analytic reason by mysticism (the original offensive which Locke had counterattacked).

"Lines Written for a School Exercise at Hawkshead" (1785), a paean to reason and "immortal science," that which will "guide the fluctuating youth / Firm in the sacred paths of moral truth," if nothing else, tells us something of the Enlightenment (humanist) values of Wordsworth's schooling. Through his life, though the fluttering Romantic imagination may have pulled him briefly aloft, he

remained weighted with empirical pragmatism. He could never fully reject reason and science nor fully accept Coleridgean metaphysics (though his best poetry comes when he assumes it).

Still, pragmatic reason passed into giddy rationalism at times during those heady years of Revolution and Terror and a balance had to be re-established. That the impetus to question rationalist hopes was midwived by Coleridge we may see when Wordsworth tells us he stumbled over reason's unacknowledged leap of faith, the "self-evident" unproven from which reason always needed to begin its sequential constructs. This was Coleridge's territory, an extrapolation from Hume, not the sort of thing Wordsworth would have come up with on his own. His "crisis of that strong disease" (*Prelude*, 1850, 306), hence, was a crisis of reason's own internal contradiction; it was not Godwinism at issue per se. I discuss the *Prelude* account of this crucial moment in detail in appendix one.

Having discarded the only plausible alternative moral authority to faith, and as yet unwilling to embrace that Enlightenment villain, Christianity, Wordsworth only now gradually turned to Nature. The *Prelude* accounts of childhood Nature ministry are constructs of 1799 and later. They are at worst anachronisms imposed on his early life for didactic intent, or at best recognitions of a "ministry" which might have occurred but went unrecognized at the time, which is the position he takes in *The Prelude*. He skips about the chapter which follows his account of the "crisis" like a schoolboy released on summer holiday, rushing into a gladsome Nature filled with "motions of delight," a riot of "brooks" and "groves," a sensual indulgence in sight and sound, attempting to convince us of a natural, unconscious return to harmony: "in Nature still / Glorifying, I found a counterpoise in her" (11.9-32). Subdued later, as ever, he sagely tells us,

I had felt
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as I stand now,
A sensitive, and a *creative* soul.
(11.250ff)

But all of this is too glib, and skirts over the period of depression, of leaderless

perplexity, until Coleridge arrived with transcendental answers. We are not surprised to learn that the original version of this passage (MS W, Mar 1806) virtually discounts the severity of the entire "crisis." We find him again with more eye to his audience (Coleridge) than to factual accounting.

By his moving to Racedown, in September 1795, and his meeting with Coleridge, Wordsworth began the next and most fruitful period of his life:

Wordsworth was now ready to listen to the arguments of the idealists and believers in innate ideas like Plato, Plotinus, the Cambridge Platonists and Berkeley, whose philosophies Locke had kept out of the Cambridge schools. (Schneider 230)

At Racedown, he writes *The Borderers* (1796-97), his final burial of humanist, rationalist moral authority.

Over the years, Wordsworth variously reveals five sorts of objections to analytical reason. First, it was particular, seeking distinctions rather than unity. Facile Enlightenment optimism over science, the uneasy cohabitation of science and the creative arts in a marriage of humanism and optimism had begun to break up. Beginning perhaps with Goldsmith and reaching a nadir by Dickens, the consequences of science were gradually perceived by writers to be social disruption and amoral technology. Yet, though this disintegration hardly touched the Romantics directly, for (but for Shelley) they barely noticed the Industrial Revolution going on about them, still they led a Romantic revolt against the assumptions (more than the social consequences) of materialism. To put it another way, they recognized the consequences to morality in theory or in their personal experience rather than in the society they only pretended to care for.

A Neo-Platonist, even a newly converted one like Wordsworth, would object that particularizing reason "sacrificed / The exactness of a comprehensive mind / To scrupulous and microscopic views . . ." (*Prelude* 10.843ff), or as Coleridge had complained, it made the universe "what but an immense heap of *little* things? . . . My mind feels as if it ached to behold & know something *great*--something *one* & *indivisible* . . ." (ltr. to Thelwall, 13 Oct 1797). Here arose Shelley's first intimations of reason's costs; he writes Elizabeth Hitchener from Wales: "*once* I was tremendously alive to tones and scenes . . . the habit of analysing feelings I

intended good purposes. . . . I know no book or system of moral philosophy written with sufficient power to melt into our affections . . . to have any influence worth our notice in forming [good] habits. . . . All this is the consequence of an undue value set upon that faculty which we call reason. (frag. "Essay on Morals," 1799; *Prose Works* 1: 103)

Hume had said that "reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition" (*Treatise* 2.3.3.414), that motive is referred "entirely to the sentiments and affections" (*Enquiry*, app. 1).²² Of course, as Sidney reminds us, poets have always yielded "to the powers of the minde an image of that whereof the *Philosopher* bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possesse the sight of the soule so much, as that other doth" (*Defence of Poesie*).

This leads to the fifth objection, that reason did not converse with the deepest part of us. It ignored the counsel of the feelings (soul, conscience, heart, etc), and thus could neither be trusted nor would have any lasting effect. In *The Borderers*,

Marmaduke is convinced by reason of the old man's guilt, but the sublime voice and eye of Nature (thunder and a star--Wordsworth's characteristic employment of sight and sound) awaken his soul to prevent the fatal act.

In "Hart-Leap Well" (1800), he declares it his poetic intention "To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts" (100), and as the cognitive world modifies the emotive one, it is clear that, though both remain important, the heart now dominates. "Alas! what boots the long laborious quest" (1809) laments the failure of "Reason, seated on her sovereign hill" to recognize that the French invader brought tyranny, not liberty. He contrasts reason's betrayal of the Germans with the correct "instincts" of the simple Swiss and Tyrolese, children of Nature and the mountains. (Yet Wordsworth notes "with sorrow" this circumstance, indicating a continuing loyalty to reason in general.)

²²Reason works by aligning the passions with it, it not being the motive but the directing force: "the moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition . . . our passions yield to our reason without any opposition" (2.3.3.416).

Shelley we know as the arch-apostle of analytic reason in his youth--"thinking without letting anything but *reason* influence your mind is the great thing" (ltr. to his sister Helen, 16 Dec 1811). But he early recognized Hume's point that men are only moved to action by emotions: "Reason is only an assemblage of our better feelings--passion considered under a peculiar mode of its operation" (ltr. to Hogg, 7 Feb 1813). He carelessly fails here to make a distinction between the two sorts of reason, analytic and revelatory, or between passions and feelings. The Romantics all learned that the moral feelings of the heart must lie separate, opposed to what Shelley called "selfish passions," whose "consequences" were "pain and evil" (ltr. to Hitchener, 14 Feb 1812). Before seeking moral authority in these disinterested feelings, analytic reason must loosen its grip over knowledge Shelley, like Wordsworth, discovered.

Reason's gift of clarity soon became insufficient; truth must not only give light, but also warmth; it demands an emotional severity impossible in a poet. We see the lengthening shadows of reason's reign in this ambiguous ascetic boast to Hitchener:

I recommend reason.--Why? is it because since I have devoted myself unreservedly to its influencing, I have never felt *Happiness*. I have rejected all fancy, all imagination. I find that all pleasure resulting to the self is thereby completely annihilated. I am led into this egotism, that you may be clearly aware of the nature of reason, as it affects me. I am sincere. (ltr., 11 Jun 1811)

Too much went out the door with the selfish passions; the crusade against Enlightenment self-interest ethics has left a wasteland. Hume had known that "when reason is against a man, he will soon turn against reason" (Durant 255), and this is true whether or not he fails to recognize it as an enemy to his own deeper nature. We may watch the citadel of reason gradually crumble through Shelley's letters of 1811-12 (e.g. the Hitchener ltrs. of 16 & 28 Oct 1811).

Yet, unlike Wordsworth, in Shelley reason dimmed only as imagination more brightly rose. It became "the cold and uncertain and borrowed light of that moon . . . Reason" in his language of symbols (ltr. to Ollier, early Mar 1821), not abandoned for its moral inadequacies, only replaced by a stronger power. Reason remains in Shelley much as in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, as an important pragmatic power, yet secondary, one which "warms not but illumines . . ."

(*Epipsychidion* 285). He virtually capitulates to the Christian tradition in this, with reason as no source of truth but only the earthly power translating truth into ethics. This is where Dante stood, and as Reason (Virgil) guided Dante toward, though not all the way, to revelation, so Shelley has Rousseau play reason's part in *The Triumph of Life*. Here he casts against type, Rousseau's failing being a failure of reason, by his passions corrupted and corrupting, and where Virgil was all but divine (following Dante's view of reason), Shelley presents us with a deformed sage twisted out of the ground.

For Coleridge, we know, feeling was by definition *a priori*, self-justified truth; as he explains to Thelwall: "My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feelings . . ." (ltr., 17 Dec 1796). And those feelings are the natural affections of the heart: "These from our nature's common impulse spring, / Unblam'd, unprais'd . . ." ("Sonnet (to Charles Lloyd)," 1796), untouched by moral judgements because they precede and determine the judging faculty. From this questioning of experience and reason, idealism inevitably grew. He would have us, like Plato, "Placed with our backs to bright Reality / That we may learn . . . / The substance from its shadow" ("The Destiny of Nations," 1796, 21-23). Even Wordsworth came to argue in *The Excursion* (book five) that the only reason to trust is right reason, revelation, as the direct perception of the truth in a life of faith.

In this we see Coleridge's conflict, from the very beginning, with Godwin. Granted, Godwin's atheism could not go unchallenged:

I do consider Mr. Godwin's Principles as vicious; and his book as a Pandar to Sensuality. . . . I am not quite convinced . . . that mind will be omnipotent over matter, that a plough will go into the field and perform its labour without the presence of the Agriculturalist, that man will be immortal in this life, and that Death is an act of the Will!!!!" (*The Watchman*, 1796, vol. 5, "To Caius Gracchus"; *Works* 2: 196)

The final three points directly defend orthodox Christianity. The example of the plough attacks mechanical Necessity, confirming that even this early, when Coleridge spoke of Necessity, he meant the power and guarantees of Providence.

Still, his apparent atheism was not the most damning fact about Godwin. Coleridge writes to Thelwall: "Believe me . . . it is not his Atheism that has prejudiced me against Godwin; but Godwin who has perhaps *prejudiced* me against atheism" (22 Jun 1796). Only partially true, and only when "atheism" is defined as mechanism, but revealing of how Godwin may have helped awaken Coleridge to the contradictions of his materialist Christian optimism. If so, Coleridge must have been alerted by the clear error of Godwin's neglect of the domestic affections. Here Godwin has discounted the seeds of the associative process to virtue, "the little unremembered acts of kindness and of love," as well as the very heart which Coleridge knew to be the wellspring of truth.

The searcher after truth must love and be beloved; for general benevolence is a necessary motive to constancy of pursuit; and this general benevolence is begotten and rendered permanent by social and domestic affections. Let us beware of that proud philosophy, which affects to inculcate philanthropy while it denounces every home-born feeling by which it is produced and nurtured. ("Political Lecture at Bristol, 1795"; *Works* 4: 1.336)

The battleground could only be morality for the Romantics. Coleridge caricatures Godwin in *The Watchman* as thinking "filial affection folly, gratitude a crime, marriage injustice, and the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes right and wise . . ." (No. 3, "Modern Patriotism"; *Works* 2: 99).

In Priestley and Hartley, Coleridge met a materialism with a benign and godly demeanor, and in the days before his rigorous self-examination, this sufficed for allegiance. With Godwin, materialism arrived severe and atheist, and Coleridge must have been shaken a bit to a reconsideration of his beliefs. Doctrines of a secular millennium and a disinterested benevolence shorn of needless theology and oppressive institution would have little appeal to this *a priori* Christian. Even the Enlightenment goal of disinterestedness Coleridge viewed with suspicion: "he that works me good with unmov'd face, / Does it but half: he chills me while he aids, / My benefactor, not my brother man!" ("Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," 1795). Still, like reason, disinterested benevolence has a place in practical life, in ethics, and is better than self-interested charity: "Yet even this, this cold beneficence / Praise, praise it, O my Soul! oft as thou scann'st / The sluggard Pity's vision-weaving tribe!"

Yet, not having been "rapt away," not having fallen at the feet of this new Gamaliel, Coleridge remained above the subsequent contempt heaped upon Godwin by the legions of the disappointed. We know that Godwin amended subsequent editions of *Political Justice* to reflect a new appreciation for the domestic affections, more sensitive, Godwin himself tells us, to Coleridge's attacks than any other. "Every objection raised in *The Watchman* and the *Conciones ad populum* is answered by a modification or clarification in later editions" of *Political Justice* (F.E.L. Priestley ed., 3: 106). His tragically brief but happy marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft also opened his eyes. Coleridge, for his part, had seen much that was "good in Godwin" from the Pantisocracy days, and Patton and Mann observe: "The idea of a critical treatise on Godwin's *Political Justice* increasingly occupied his mind from 1796 to 1799 . . ." (*Works* 1: xxxvii). Certainly it would have been a mostly condemnatory work, but not entirely so. Probably the popularity of Godwin made him a convenient target for Coleridge's later crusade against materialism, perhaps the simple ingenuous clarity of his approach made the materialist errors and heresies more evident, but there also must have been something in Godwin's obviously benign intentions that encouraged Coleridge to respond in kind. When Coleridge had more or less secured his own escape from materialism, he was able to settle into a distant, but sincere, fondness for Godwin which much resembles the final attitude of Wordsworth. Both poets do themselves credit in this, aided perhaps by the shared English phlegmatic conservatism among the three and by the poets' fairly remote acquaintanceship with Godwin, spared the nagging burden Godwin could be to those closer to him.

II.B.2 The Causal Difficulty

In Coleridge, mechanical Necessity turned into a villain as rapidly as it had been shallowly based. In a marginal note in a copy of *Conciones ad Populum*, undated but added years later, he comments on a passage asserting the doctrine of Necessity:

It is worthy of remark, that we may possess a thing in such fullness as prevents its possession from being an object of distinct Consciousness. Only as it lessens or dims, we reflect on it & learn

to value it. This is one main cause why young men of high & ardent minds find nothing repulsive in the doctrines of necessity--which in after years they (as I have) recoil from. (*Works* 1: 49n).

By "fullness" he can only mean immediacy, that is, that the doctrine was so popular, so generally assumed, as to escape serious reflection. In Coleridge, it filled his senses only, was not "possessed" by the heart (see *Works* 4: 1.338n), as his blithe blindness to the contradictions of those early years confirms.

Still, given numerous emotional reasons for disaffection with mechanical Necessity, Coleridge, more than any of the others, had to justify a change in philosophy with philosophic reasons. Again, these reasons come strictly after the fact, an adjustment of philosophy to faith amounting to a tidying up of argument. Yet from the other side, he was engaged in a rescue of philosophy itself. Mechanical, or "philosophical," Necessity, when divorced from the providential moral agency of God, Coleridge could happily deny and condemn as he pleased, but so long as it had philosophical credibility, so long as it remained logically irrefutable, if thrown out it would take philosophy with it. This, at least, was how it seemed. Philosophy in the hands of the mainstream Enlightenment philosophers had become the propagandist of materialism. Kant and Coleridge independently sought to re-enlist it as the guardian of faith it had been since Plato and, more specifically, the defender of Christianity St. Augustine had made it. This crusade made Kant the greatest of modern philosophers, while it took Coleridge away from the sublime poetry where lay his genius to the wasting of his life in fussing with Kantian notions without advancing them.

His escape from materialism, which both freed in him his best poetry and set him on the road to Kant, began with its inherent atheism. Coleridge saw clearly into the black void of the atheists, into the purposeless, pointless life without God and supreme moral authority (our post-Byronic reality, in fact) and felt deeply that philosophy must prove otherwise. More than simply seeking the confirmation that philosophy might provide the truths of faith, he knew that the faculties of head and heart, of the intellect and feelings, were both gifts of God, and as such both must be able to demonstrate the truths of the Scriptures. Both must support Christianity and must harmonize with each other. So, his battle

against post-Hobbesian materialism may be seen as one man's struggle to use philosophy to shore up an occasionally sagging faith and to use faith to rescue philosophy from fatal atheism. The latter mission he shared with Kant, though the Königsberg professor had no overt Christian purpose, at first satisfied to fend off Humean skepticism and later to affirm no more than the limits of reason. Coleridge was happy to stand with Kant in the recovery of philosophy, as they hauled their mistress, nearly expired, from the depths. But in Coleridge's need to use the saved to protect his own faith from a similar fate, he pursued assurances beyond Kant, taking the Kantian concepts where the master knew they should not go. It is ironic that the philosopher who, above all others, dedicated his best efforts to establishing exactly what could and could not be known, making his ultimate achievement the precise delineation of that divide, should have his immediate disciples, most grievously Coleridge, destroy that distinction in the scramble after belief. But Coleridge hurtled along with the great engine of his emotional needs; if he possessed the mind of a philosopher, he owned too large and vulnerable a heart for it. Nothing so characterizes his philosophic method as the time spent methodically subverting philosophy. Philosophy had in Coleridge a fifth column from the domain of faith.

In driving a wedge between Necessity and materialism in his denying of the knowledge of causality, Hume gave Coleridge and Kant the opening they needed. In Coleridge's words:

Our nature is adapted for the observation of Effects only and from the Effects we deduce the Existence and attributes of Causes but their immediate Essence is in all other cases as well as Deity hidden from us. (*LRR*, 1795, lec. 1; *Works* 1: 97)

Hume had shown that what we call cause and effect are nothing but a "constant conjunction" of two states of being. Nothing of one requires the other; we only experience them constantly proximate in time; we presume a causal connection where we only experience a contingency. Necessity was here exposed on a foundation of faith, faith in causal connection, no better a claimant for empirical certainty than any religion. And how can mechanical Necessity suppose to deny freewill when it cannot even confirm itself? Coleridge decided quite quickly that it offered no adequate counterweight to the evidence of feeling and the needs of morality, both of which asserted freewill. This, added to idealism's conclusion

that all acts of the mind, whatever their pretense to objectivity, required an initial act of faith, a first overleap of the idealist gap between sense and things-in-themselves, cleared the ground for Coleridge to build the temple of his choice.

Causation's leap of faith recalls the same difficulty reason had when questioned by Wordsworth (under the urging of Coleridge) as discussed above. If we follow Socrates' nagging and investigate our assumptions, and then the assumptions behind those, we will soon find our proud reasonings based originally on principles of pure unchallenged, blind, faith. The *a priori*, Descartes and Locke's "self-evident" truth, the "given" in any argument shattered reason's claims to authority as they did materialist science. Into the power vacuum rushes the transcendental. If materialism cannot offer a thorough explanation of the world, of motion and change as well as matter, then it loses its *raison d'être*; it becomes an inadequate alternative whose moral costs are too high.

Coleridge needed to retain causation, however, that he might affirm culpability. He is pursuing, he writes Godwin,

Investigations relative to the omne scibile of human Nature--*what we are, & how we become what we are*; so as to solve the two grand Problems, how, being acted upon, we shall act; how, acting, we shall be acted upon. (4 Jun 1803)

The freedom and efficacy of the will matters only as it is necessary to moral culpability. And if the route to culpability travels through freewill, the route to freewill travels through causality. Culpability has meaning only when the products of the will are of unquestioned parentage, actions irreducibly linked to intention. Similarly, moral development, the associative pathways, and ethical coherence in the necessary consequences of good and evil actions, all must be shown to have a Necessity behind them, causation again being the bedrock. Coleridge had a moral mission--the Enlightenment spirit of disinterested inquiry, blandly taking its findings with trust that truth would justify itself, thoughtless of moral consequences, infuriated him.

Especially, he would have us look to "That hidden mystery," "in which the Present involves the Future, and in the Finite the Infinite exists potentially," the

unity above the mind's own categories of space and time, where causation alone exists. Reality,

contemplated under the relations of time presents itself to the understanding retrospectively, as an infinite ascent of Causes, and prospectively as an interminable progression of Effects--that which contemplated in Space is beheld intuitively as a law of action and re-action, continuous and extending beyond all bound--this same mystery freed from the the phenomena of Time and Space, and seen in the depth of *real* Being, reveals itself to the pure Reason as the actual immanence of ALL in EACH. (*SM*, 1816; *Works* 6.49-50)

Explanations by materialist or atomistic causality accept as fundamental a species and ordering of reality that is demonstrably superficial.

So, allying with Hume no further than to demolish materialism and mechanical Necessity, Coleridge abandons him in rebuilding causation to serve morality on the foundation of Providence.

What our Priestleian Metaphysics call necessity is but an empirical scheme of destroying one contingency with another . . . the unconquerable Foe, retreating step by step and still facing the Pursuer . . . the contingency playing at leap-frog vaults backwards. As if History could be thus explained; as if the motives of action were not a part of the action. Here comes the head and neck of the Horse; but what was behind? The Tail: Ergo the Tail pushed the Head and Neck forward.²³

Though we cannot prove connection between what we call "cause" and what we call "effect," they still exist; still all must be effects of some cause. The answer is that events appear to us proximate to each other, but are related only in reference to an unseen, unifying cause of them all (the horse of his example). Thus do all things share a common "substance" (to use Spinoza's word), or "will" (i.e. energy, to Schopenhauer), or motive principle. Analytic reason (science) will pursue causes behind causes, premises behind reasonings, *ad infinitum*: "Or we must break off the series arbitrarily, and affirm an absolute something that is in and of itself at once cause and effect (*causi sui*)" (*BL* 1: 12.187).

²³MS C, 45; qtd. in Muirhead 104n.

II.B.3 The Rescue of Morality

In a footnote to *Joan of Arc* (1796), Coleridge observes of materialism:

It has been asserted that Sir Isaac Newton's philosophy leads in its consequences to Atheism: perhaps not without reason. For if matter, by any powers or properties *given* to it, can produce the order of the visible world and even generate thought; why may it not have possessed such properties by *inherent* right? and where is the necessity of a God? matter is according to the mechanic philosophy capable of acting most wisely and most beneficently without Wisdom or Benevolence; and what more does the Atheist assert? . . . Sir Isaac Newton's Deity seems . . . to have delegated so much power as to make it inconceivable what he can have reserved. He is dethroned by Vice-regent second causes.²⁴

Materialism had led as surely away from faith as any doctrine could; Enlightenment deism was either dishonest or self-delusory: "An indifferent Deity is a contradiction in terms, or rather another word for No Deity" (*LRR*, lec. 1; *Works* 1: 105). All materialist philosophies became suspect.

If mechanical Necessity implied at best an indifferent Deity, one that failed to honor the emotional need for a benign, parental, God, an answerer of prayer, a mourner over fallen sparrows rather than a watchmaker, then it failed Coleridge. Deism was weak on the explanation of causation and implausible concerning divine purpose. He offers us a bit of ridicule, a dream of a man peering through a microscope (empirical science), describing "an infinite Series of Causes" which appear as

a string of blind men of which the last caught hold of the skirt of the one before him, he of the next, and so on till they were all out of sight; and that they all walked straight without making one false step. We enquired, Who there is at the head to guide them. He answered No one, but that the string of blind men went on for ever without a beginning, for though one blind man could not move without stumbling, yet that infinite Blindness supplies the want of sight. I burst into Laughter at this strange exposition and awoke-- (*LRR*, lec. 1; *Works* 1: 92-93)

In a 1796 notebook entry, he speaks of intending a poem, "a dissection of

²⁴note to line 34 of *Joan of Arc*, book 2; *Poems* 2: 1112-13.

Atheism--particularly the Godwinian system of Pride . . . Proud of what? An outcast of blind Nature ruled by fatal Necessity--Slave of an idiot Nature!" (*Notebooks* 1: no. 174). The short passage is rich in assumptions and motivations: materialism, necessitarianism, and atheism are all equal and opposed to purpose. He shows contempt for the particularizing methods of science ("dissection"). Necessity means fate, which means slavery, one that mocks the hubris of the humanists. The emotive word "outcast" tells of the parental God this necessitarianism forsakes. In this we see the desperate emotional loneliness of Coleridge. The heart of this image appears in a letter to Wade on 27 January of that year, complaining that Erasmus Darwin's speculations on the evolution of man would reduce men to "the outcasts of a blind idiot called nature, rather than "the children of an all-wise and infinitely good God. . . ."

Associationism, resting only on Locke, meant that the senses suffered a barrage of unplanned and (seemingly) random sensations, the sum total of which would only by sheer accident produce a moral being. Morality needed a higher assurance than that.

Conceive, for instance, a broad stream, winding through a mountainous country with an indefinite number of currents, varying and running into each other according as the gusts chance to blow from the opening of the mountains. The temporary union of several currents in one, so as to form the main current of the moment, would present an accurate image of Hartley's theory of the will. (*BL* 1: 6.76-77)

Better the moral purposes of God should form the will than we be "the slave of chances" before "the despotism of outward impressions" (*BL* 1: 7.80). Only from an assumption of Providence does there seem to be any assurance of a moral development.

By 1797, his attacks on Necessity and defense of purpose had begun to harmonize with Wordsworth (or rather vice versa), reflecting their constant conjunction. Their roughly concurrent dramas, *Osorio* and *The Borderers* draw their power from the moral vacuum materialism creates. *Osorio* (an eponymous villain confirms Coleridge's exploration of evil in this play) embodies an expedient fatalism, telling us of Coleridge's fears of amoral Necessity and presaging Byronic, post-Romantic angst (see, in fact, *Don Juan* XV.ii):



This same world of ours--
 It is a puddle in a storm of rain,
 And we the air-bladders, that course up and down,
 And joust and tilt in merry tournament,
 And when one bubble runs foul of another,
 The lesser must needs break!
 (V.144f)

II.B.3.a Autonomous Evil

The appearance of characters such as Osorio and Oswald (in Wordsworth's *Borderers*) suggests another very un-Enlightenment element, the possibility of autonomous evil. Certainly both of these figures may be explained in terms of conventional sensation and association theories. So Priestley argued in his *Doctrine of Philosophic Necessity* and Hartley in his *Observations on Man*. Young Coleridge could hardly dispute with his two most beloved mentors: "Reasoning strictly . . . I should deny the existence of any Evil" (*LRR*, 1795, lec. 1; *Works* 1: 105). In "Religious Musings" (1794, 1796) he gives us the optimist's creed: "Teachers of Good through Evil, by brief wrong / Making Truth lovely . . ." (195-96). Reasoning strictly, however, though he had the mind for the highest logic, did not always suit his temperament, nor did the obvious disagreement with the Scriptures, recognized in the conspicuous "should" above, augur well for the longevity of optimism.

Shelley, as a youth, we know to be the only consistent necessitarian among these poets: "there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own particular mode of being" (note to *QM* 6.198). We hear Socrates here, speaking through Enlightenment humanism: "evil is error." When Mary tells us in her "Note on Prometheus Unbound" that Shelley saw evil as "not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled," that "mankind had only to will," she confirms the humanist view. But she misses, I think, his vital movement by that time to theodicy. These same terms are also true of sentient, Manichaeic evil, the "Evil Principle," opposition to which she says was "the subject he loved best to dwell on. . . ."

Later, idealism helped preserve vestiges of evil as error in Shelley, to the extent that "thought . . . is the measure of the universe" (*PU* II.iv.72-73). Perhaps his might be called a compromise position. Necessity, the agency now of the divine Absolute, remains totally amoral, a blind mechanism, as Jupiter discovers: "Mercy! mercy! / No pity, no release, no respite!" (*PU* III.i.63-4). But instead of vanishing, or being reabsorbed into Prometheus, he lies as distinct, waiting potential in the expectant volcano. While simple error may indeed unleash the beast, as Count Cenci, by assuming men evil, allows himself to be tyrannized (as was Prometheus) by his own inner Jupiter, we may never doubt that there is more than error in "Hate--that shapeless fiendly thing / Of many names, all evil, some divine, / Which . . . the heart its snaky folds entwine . . ." (*R of I* 8.21).

In Coleridge and Wordsworth, even in their necessitarian days, the nagging impression remains of uncaused evil. Optimism did not allow Coleridge to believe in autonomous evil, while standard puritanism insisted on it. As so often during these years, failing to resolve the contradiction in his mind, he mostly ignored it. But in its denial of evil, combined with its hopes for something of an earthly millennium, optimism undermined whole ranks of pillars of Christian theology, including the need for redemption and an afterlife. Still, it took some personal shocks, his wife's labor pains and the miscarriage of a potential "Hartley or Newton," and more seriously, the fall of a very personal sparrow, his son Berkeley, in 1799 to awaken him. From Germany, he writes the grieving mother:

That God works by *general* laws are to me words without meaning
. . . What and who are these horrible shadows necessity and
general law, to which God himself must offer *sacrifices*--hecatombs
of sacrifices?--I feel a deep conviction that these shadows exist not.
. . . I confess that the more I think, the more I am discontented
with the doctrines of Priestly [sic]. (8 Apr 1799)

The crushing unfairness of life is exactly why faith exists. Light misfortune may be borne, but the worst griefs would be intolerable as a mindless, mechanical happenstance. Yet blithely to attribute gross injustice to God just on the strength of a belief in optimism tests faith too severely. Religion always comes around to a separate, efficacious evil.

On stern Blencartha's perilous height
The winds are tyrannous and strong;
And flashing forth unsteady light

From stern Blencartha's skiey height,
As loud the torrents throng!
Beneath the moon, in gentle weather,
They bind the earth and sky together.
But oh! the sky and all its forms, how quiet!
The things that seek the earth, how full of noise and riot!
("A Thought Suggested by a View . . .," 1800)

The polarity of eternal and transient, the oldest of philosophic polarities, the reason for philosophy and religion, seem all but irreconcilable. The forces of this world, "the things that seek the earth," are autonomous, engaged in a Miltonic battle with the powers of heaven. Clearly the evil or misguided have inferior power, calmed by the ubiquitous authority in Coleridge of the harmonizing, binding moon, his great symbol of the watching eye of heaven. But they still are autonomous, as much so as the psychological sublime evils of "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel."

So optimism, as an explanation of the Providential universe, was crumbling:

I believe most steadfastly in original Sin; that from our mother's wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where our understandings are in the Light [of divine Truth], that our organization is depraved, & our volitions imperfect; and we sometimes see the good without *wishing* to attain it, and oftener *wish* it without the energy that wills & performs. . . . (ltr. to George Coleridge, 10 Mar 1798)

Remembering his usual supine orthodoxy before his brother, we still have to take seriously this Augustinianism (passed through Calvin), this specific repudiation of Aquinas and the Enlightenment, and especially the way original sin overthrows Priestley, Hartley, and Godwin.

Perhaps of more importance than philosophic or theological reasons, he refers obliquely, but clearly, to his own personal experiences of evil or sin, an allusion, I think, to opium. Here, above all, he knew the limitations of reason, the failure of the unaided will, when he desires to abstain but cannot. And he was forced to doubt the unchallenged supremacy of an innate morality when at other times he clearly desires the drug knowing it to be an evil.

In *The Borderers*, Wordsworth produced the one evil character in all of his works; elsewhere, the worst are never more than in error or misled. Only for the

purposes of drama (this being also his sole theatre piece) and in concert with Coleridge in a specific study of the evil of undirected rationality could such as Oswald flow from Wordsworth's pen. He was too much a humanist and too emotionally secure to think ill of people.

But if Wordsworth retired from *The Borderers* back in the direction of Enlightenment tolerance, Coleridge used *Osorio* as a springboard toward greater acceptance of evil. Albert, the spokesman for the conscience, inveighs against imprisonment:

what if guilty?
Is this the only cure? Merciful God!
Each pore and natural outlet shrivell'd up
By ignorance and parching poverty,
His energies roll back upon his heart,
And stagnate and corrupt till changed to poison,
They break out on him like a loathsome plague-spot! . . .
So he lies
Circled with evil, till his very soul
Unmoulds its essence, hopelessly deform'd
By sights of ever more deformity!
(V.110-25)

The epistemology here is associationist, but the stress, the language, is very different. In a letter to Thelwall (13 May 1796), of this same period, the imagery reappears. Even considering the audience, the language is extreme: "The real source of inconstancy, depravity, & prostitution, is *Property*, which mixes with & poisons every thing good--& is beyond doubt the Origin of all Evil." His images reek of disease, diagnoses of moral corruption described in terms of literal corruption. Evil as error could speak easily of reform; Aquinas reassures us of the innate good intentions of men (the Socratic "no man does evil knowingly"). But evil as disease took the cure out of the hands of man. Error was caused and therefore correctable by men; disease was autonomous and (especially in these days of still infant medicine) it carried out its own purposes beyond the power of the will of the sufferer. Evil may readily be caused by men, or at least we be made susceptible to it, and hence Coleridge's intermittent calls for social reform, but it was curable, we hardly need guess, only by God. Culpability remained, however, for this disease was of the heart, of the very wellsprings of intention, where moral accountability must also lie. Besides, all men knew of salvation, and

thus the continuance of the evil or sin, if not the original infection, was culpable.

In a passage published in *Anima Poetae*, of October 1803, a report of a late-night philosophical sabbat with Hazlitt, he expounds at length in explaining evil as the distance of our finite state from the infinite, a shortfall inherent in finite beings by definition and a cause of discontent to the imagination. (This resembles Byron's curse of the imagination, discussed in chapter six, which defines "sin" as the inadequacy of our state to our conceptions.) He arrives at the obvious solution of quietism, humility, passive acceptance of the divine will. For my purposes, I simply wish to stabilize Coleridge at his mature attitude on evil, one he stakes out in opposition to the Lockians, and in effect, against meaningful reform, as a belief in "Evil, essentially such, not by accident of outward circumstances, not derived from it's physical consequences, or from any cause, out of itself" (*Friend*, 11 Jan 1810; *Works* 4: 2.279). That is, autonomous.

II.B.3.b Culpability

Alexander of Aphrodisias defends Aristotle's commonsense morality against the determinism of the Stoics regarding the necessary existence of freewill:

those whose power of doing some other thing besides those which they do has been taken away by circumstances, and who do not themselves contribute anything to those circumstances surrounding them on account of which they do [these things]-how could anyone still say that these act wrongly or rightly? (*On Fate*, sec. 34)

So it is that "fate and law are opposed" and, with law, "virtue and vice" and all that is "shameful or noble and praiseworthy or blameworthy or deserving of reward or punishment" (sec 36).

On the other side, Hume argues that only by assuming Necessity can we properly assign praise or blame:

1. "Men are not blam'd for such evil actions as they perform ignorantly and causally. . . . Why? but because the causes of these actions are only momentary, and terminate in them alone."
2. "Men are less blam'd for such evil actions, as they perform hastily and unpremeditatively. . . . For what reason? but because a hasty temper, tho' a constant cause in the mind, operates only at intervals, and infects not the

whole character."

3. "Repentance wipes off every crime. . . . How is this to be accounted for? But by asserting that actions render the person criminal, merely as they are proofs of criminal passions or principles in the mind; and when by any alteration of these principles they cease to be just proofs, they likewise cease to be criminal. But according to the doctrine of *liberty* or *chance* they never were just proofs, and consequently never were criminal" (*Treatise* 2.3.2.412).

Culpability requires that we believe in a compelling force behind our behavior:

Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and dispositions of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action itself may be blameable . . . but the person is not . . . as it proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable or constant. . . . 'Tis only upon the principles of necessity, that a person acquires any merit or demerit from his actions, however the common opinion may incline to the contrary. (411)

Christianity, obviously, follows Aristotle, leaving a Christian necessitarian, such as Hartley, in something of a quandary. He does not answer Hume, who as Byron says is unanswerable. He does escape Necessity's denial of freewill, and thus heresy, by means of the Lockean distinction, the one we have already seen between philosophic and practical freewill, between freedom of the will, which he denies, and freedom of the volition, which he claims. If Hume can deny the former, he will recover culpability through the latter:

it may be observed, that when any action is commended or blamed, this is always done upon supposition, that the action under consideration was the effect of voluntary powers. Thus, when a man commits an action otherwise blameable, through inattention, ignorance, or disease, he is excused on account of its being involuntary; unless the inattention, ignorance, or disease, were themselves voluntary, and then the blame remains. (*Obsv.* 2: 1. prop. 113)

Though popular, this was a specious distinction and neither Priestley nor Godwin gave it credence. Necessity, if taken honestly, fundamentally altered social morality. The criminal is now the victim of his circumstance and punishment is morally insupportable. Most important and most unacceptable to

standard morality, Necessity seemed to deny culpability. I again turn to young Shelley for pure, devout necessitarianism:

Reward and punishment must be considered, by the Necessarian, merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert . . . would no longer have any meaning; and he who should inflict pain upon another for no better reason than that he deserved it, would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice. . . . revenge, under the name of justice . . . cannot be supposed to have augmented, even at the long run, the stock of pleasurable sensation in the world. (*QM* note to 6.198)

His mentor was Godwin: "The assassin cannot help the murder he commits any more than the dagger" (*PJ*, Priestley ed., 7.1.324). On punishment they agree as well: "Coercion cannot convince, cannot conciliate, but on the contrary alienates . . ." (7.3.250). Utility can sanction punishment, however, when employed as a deterrent of future crimes, that is, as a cause toward beneficial effects: "It is right that I should inflict suffering, in every case where it can be clearly shown that such infliction will produce an overbalance of good" (7.1.245). Coleridge recalls the magistrate who sentenced the horsethief to hang, not for stealing the horse, but that horses may not be stolen ("Elements of Religious Philosophy," "Preliminary," *Aids* 133n).

Shelley held to this ethic long after he had outgrown simple mechanical necessitarianism. To his eternal credit, he lived his principles, in this regard especially, with a rare diligence. In his review of *Frankenstein* (1818), he denied that the monster was culpable for his crimes. Its actions were not "the offspring of any unaccountable propensity to evil," but instead "flow irresistibly from certain causes fully adequate to their production," the being generally, "Necessity and Human Nature" (*Works* 6: 264). The Maniac in "Julian and Maddalo" demonstrates again the pointlessness of prison and its baleful effects: "Treat a person ill, and he will become wicked." Despite repeated frustrations with Byron, Shelley adheres to tolerance: "It is foolish of me to be angry with him; he can no more help being what he is than yonder door can help being a door" (qtd. in Marchand 3: 976).

But severe puritanical Christianity squinted across the eighteenth century, mesmerizing the Romantics. Blame not any controlling powers outside the will,

Milton's Samson warns Dalila:

if weakness may excuse,
What Murderer, what Traytor, Parricide,
Incestuous, Sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore
With God or Man will gain thee no remission.
(*Samson Agonistes* 831ff)²⁵

Coleridge first attempts to hold together the alliance of necessitarianism and Christianity in Priestleyan providential optimism: "A Necessitarian, I cannot possibly disesteem a man for his religious or anti-religious Opinions--and as an *Optimist*, I feel diminished concern" (ltr. to Thelwall, Apr 1796). He did not sustain this commendable, Enlightenment tolerance; by the second Lay Sermon (1817) he was belaboring the Socinians for this very position (*Works* 6: 182-83n).

Coleridge had a God to justify, and he suffered for his faith. Osorio, in a distempered confusion, seeks an excuse for his ordering a virtuous brother's death by an appeal to the determining power of the natural passions over his will:

What have I done but that which nature destin'd
Or the blind elements stirr'd up within me?
If good were meant, why were we made these beings?
And if not meant. . . . (II.114)

He proffers three excuses in as many lines: natural Necessity itself; overpowering passions arising mechanically, without purpose; and divine malevolence, or at least indifference. But he protests in vain; we have seen Milton's answer through Samson, and Coleridge had to agree.

In *The Statesman's Manual* (1816), Coleridge claims that the pathway from motive to action is determined (and is not the one area of quasi-freedom, suspension of choice, of Locke), but that real freedom lies deeper, behind motive and not at the active end, with volition, as Hartley had said:

²⁵Of course, Milton was no consistent philosopher, as no ideologically precise Christian can be. If he holds Dalila to a Sophoclean rigour of culpability, he allows Samson to escape the sin of suicide through being a tool of Providence, dying "Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold / Of dire necessity . . ." (1665-66). The chorus then intones a justification of Providence as above all justice (1745ff).

motives can be causes only in a secondary and improper sense, inasmuch as the man makes the motive, not the motives the man; and that the same thought shall be motive to one man and no motive to his neighbour; (a sufficient proof that the motives themselves are effects, the principle of which, good or evil, lies far deeper). . . . (*Works* 6: 21)

This freedom of our inner principles will be considered in chapter five.

It might be thought a measure of philosophic inconsistency during the necessitarian years that he never denied freewill. On the contrary, he vigorously asserted the libertarian and Christian argument that morality demanded it. He sees it as necessary to associative learning through pleasure and pain:

A State of Compulsion, even tho that Compulsion be directed by perfect Wisdom, keeps Mankind stationary--for whenever it is withdrawn, after a lapse of ages, they have yet to try evil in order to know whether or no it be good. (*Notebooks* 1: no. 150, 1796-97).

In another notebook entry (no. 174.16) of the same period, he attacks Godwin in defense of freewill. Whatever the philosophic inconsistency, I may safely say that no incongruity existed in his heart during these years. As with Wordsworth, freewill remained for Coleridge a given, as much a fact of the moral life as Necessity. Reconcilement of human freewill with divine omnipotence and omniscience had always been an inexplicable divine mystery, something to be accepted with faith.

II.B.3.c The Abandonment of Society

Amid surging French infatuation with the hopeful implications of sensationalism and Necessity, d'Alembert could throw the damp towel of past history over the enthusiasm: "Barbarism lasts for centuries, and seems to be our natural element; reason and good taste are merely transient." Voltaire called history, "little else than a long succession of useless cruelties . . . a collection of crimes, follies, and misfortunes."²⁶ And even Gibbon, though the English were

²⁶ *Works*, trans. Smollett, 9: 142, 144, 152). I am indebted to Passmore (216, 223) for many of these quotations.

restrained as much in their expressions of disgust as of hope, could only agree that it was "a record of the crimes, the vices and the follies of mankind." We have seen Godwin call history "a vast abortion" and Shelley takes from Voltaire and Gibbon the view of history as "that record of crimes & miseries . . ." (ltr. to Godwin, 1812). Even when Gibbon wishes to be hopeful, proposing a better future, the "pleasing conclusion that every stage of the world has increased and still increases the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race" (*Decline and Fall*, chap. 38), we realize how much is lost in that small word "perhaps." The smallest doubt, over morality especially, sinks perfectibility; where hope has taken up the mitre of religion, even modest reticence becomes heresy. The *philosophes* in general, as Passmore points out (173), deeply distrusted the People, felt them almost subhuman in their degradation, and democracy as an ideal only the distant end of a society-wide sensationalist renovation.

Likewise, among the Germans, Moses Mendelssohn little trusted progress (see *Jerusalem*, 1783, 2.45), and Herder saw the efforts of man as "an abominable series of desolations on the sacred earth." He soon came to a Kantian dialectical optimism, however,²⁷ that is, that only through strife and competition may we progress, the fertilization and plowing of the soil of society, that "only amid storms can the noble plant flourish," even that "the genius of humanity blooms in continually renovated youth. . . ."²⁸

Unlike these others quoted above, Shelley disparaged historical man that he might contrast him with future man. In a passage in *Queen Mab*, repeated verbatim in *The Daemon of the World* four years later, Shelley gives us the product of association, the Godwinian perfected man:

with taintless body and mind;
Blessed from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.

²⁷ even this was borrowed from the French--see Turgot on perfectibility in his 1750 speech quoted above.

²⁸ *Ideas* 9: 1; qtd. in Passmore 213

and society:

Man . . .

stands

An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame . . .
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend
Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there. . . .
(8.199-234)

This was the hope, a hope based on the certainty offered by natural Necessity for man freed from imposed authority. The difference between these polarities of hope and despair not so much reflects experience as different assumptions about the innate character of man.

On Necessity as an agent of hope, Coleridge regressed to the common sense opinion, the implication generally associated with "fatalism," that "It is an undoubted Fact of human nature, that the sense of impossibility quenches all will" (*Friend*, no. 5, 14 Sept 1809; *Works* 4: 2.71).²⁹ In the first place, this is not so, as we see in the Romantic's own belief in idealizing, ethereal poetry, and as Byron's whole career demonstrated. But more importantly, necessitarians such as Priestley argued that only with the assurance of consistent results of one's efforts offered by Necessity, does effort become worthwhile, that Necessity alone encourages and justifies effort. Mere possibility, all that the Christian can offer, will not in itself suffice as an encouragement to the will; possibility must be joined to power.

Perfectibility unalloyed by reservations we never find in Coleridge, and even in his most radical years he could and did dispute it altogether. In *The Watchman* (1796, No. 5), after unnecessarily making the point that actual perfection is not possible, he offers a social reason as to why even the approach to perfectibility is inadvisable: "It runs counter to the leading principle of Society, which . . . On

²⁹See also *Conciones*; *Works* 1: 43-44.

mutual wants builds mutual happiness." He touches here on the basic hostility of Enlightenment individualism to social harmony (a theoretical point only, until individualism abandoned classical temperance to a pact with the gothic ego). But he ignores or fails to see it, judging as he must every issue against Christianity: "Each individual would be a kingdom within himself--a God" (*Works* 2: 169). A jealous deity enervates secular efforts toward progress at every turn.

Coleridge's social hopes culminated in his view of the millennium, his only perfectibility, what Thelwall called "his darling hobby-horse, 'the republic of God's own making'" (ltr. to Dr. Crompton, 3 Mar 1798):

The Millennium:--in which I suppose, that Man will continue to enjoy the highest glory, of which human nature is capable. . . . that the wicked will during the same period, be suffering the remedies adapted to their several bad habits. I suppose that this period will be followed by the passing away of this Earth and by our entering the state of pure intellect; when all Creation shall rest from its labours. (1797 note to "Religious Musings," line 359)

But millennial thoughts appear only sporadically after 1797-98, when his attention turned inward to idealism and the mind's power, and then only carelessly, to evangelize the masses.

Certainly, perfectibility is the wrong word to use for Coleridge's concept of salvation. Perfectibility assumes a doctrine of progress, which itself requires a mechanism, universal and necessary. Christianity offers no such mechanism, no theory of progress, and none appears in Coleridge. After the mostly fashionable paeans to the potential of humanity of the early and mid 1790s, he hardly even implies the idea of progress at all. Original sin, he tells us, requires a "cure" (ltr. to George quoted above), which as I have discussed concerning evil as disease is a thing different in kind from that correctable by human effort. From the beginning, Coleridge's hopes were based on salvation rather than perfectibility, something dependent on the will of God rather than man, individual rather than social, and by Scripture limited to the few.

Ultimately, perfectibility requires Locke; the appearance of innate qualities, even beneficent ones, dooms secular hopes. Coleridge had betrayed himself in a bit of youthful fluff "On Imitation" (1791): "All are not born to soar--and ah! how

few / In tracks where Wisdom leads their paths pursue!" Not wishing to make too much of childhood verse, still, so bald a denial of Lockean sensationalism, only upon which a century of social hopes, not least of all Coleridge's own generation, were based, cannot be dismissed. We must understand youthful liberalism in him (e.g. Pantisocracy) in Christian utopian terms, as being things fundamentally dissimilar to the Godwinism, Jacobinism, and other egalitarian and democratic notions upon which contemporary secular millennial hopes were commonly based. This vast gulf divided his "liberalism" from Wordsworth's and explains the very different catharses they underwent in the late 1790s. Confirmation comes in "Religious Musings" (1794): "blest are they . . . the elect of Heaven . . ." (45-46), and we are reminded that optimism, the Necessity of a benign Providence, easily accommodates predestination.

So, a statement of possible perfectibilism:

after a diligent . . . study of Locke, Hartley and others who have written most wisely about the Nature of Man--I appear to myself to see the point of *possible* perfection at which the World may perhaps be destined to arrive--

can only be followed by the real power behind the hope:

But how to lead Mankind from one point to the other is a process of such infinite Complexity, that in deep-felt humility I resign it to that Being--'Who shaketh the Earth out of her place and pillars thereof tremble. . . . (ltr. to George Coleridge, 6 Nov 1794)

The closer one looks at Coleridge, the less he was of the egalitarianism of his age, the more he fades into the uncertainties of a providential Christianity.

Still, his limited, suppliant hope, based only on the ultimately indecipherable will of God, suffered no crisis of hope collapsed, like some Romantics, nor the creeping despair of others. Anchored to Christianity, Coleridge's balance of cold metaphysics and a warm heart was never seriously awry. From a distance of twenty-five years, Coleridge could say of *Conciones ad populum*: "Except the two or three passages involving the doctrine of Phil. Necessity & Unitarianism I see little or nothing in these outbursts of my youthful Zeal to retract . . ." (marginal note, Jul 1820; *Works* 1: 25). Generally, he held social opinions to the right of his contemporaries in the radical 1790s and remaining essentially where he was saw

them drift past him in the course of years, finally finding himself somewhat to their left. The exhortations of *The Watchman* (1796) reappear in *The Statesman's Manual* (1817), a cautious liberalism, consistent because Christian.

Wordsworth, struggling toward a faith, was quite anxious to demonstrate universality and Necessity in the progress of the individual toward virtue. Not until the 1799 *Prelude* do we see him beginning to shake free from the assumptions of sensationalism. Even in 1799, when he speaks of himself as "favored," he refers to the circumstances of his birth, rather than the innate qualities he means later. Confusion and contradiction compound as he passes into the new century. A continuing and painful catharsis wrung the illusions or pretenses of hope for mankind from him in the nine years of 1796-1804. The 1799 *Prelude* ends with present hopes dashed but the basis for hope supposedly intact. Reform and revolution had not gone awry because of a flaw in man; perfectible, innately good human nature remained: "I yet / Despair not of our nature" (487-88). The ominous shadow of "yet," however, tells us all we need to know about the sincerity of hope even in 1799. Wordsworth is bowing here a bit to Coleridge, whose belief in man's original sin was no longer hedged by evasions, while pretending to a stubborn residual humanism. With "yet," in the dominant end position in the poetic line, tottering so conspicuously, ready to fall, Wordsworth is tacitly admitting a preparation to surrender.

In the MS Y draft (1804) for book eight, "We live by admiration," discussing his six stages of development (see discussion above), amid a celebration of associative affirmations, the cancer of hope, innate inequality, has entered. The ascent beyond coarseness, rising out of the mass to stages five, rationalism, and six, true revelation, is left to one "by constitution of his frame / And circumstances favored from the first" (125-26). In the same year we have *The Prelude's* concluding book and the ascent of Snowdon (though the event itself occurred in 1791). Men never cease to be vulnerable to the power of Nature, he says, "even the grossest minds," at moments of sublime sensations, "must see and hear, / And cannot chuse but feel" (13.83-84). But Wordsworth, now in the thrall of Coleridge and the imagination, makes no more gestures to the many. The ten thousand cannot know the power of Nature which is "brother of the glorious faculty / Which higher minds bear with them as their own" (89-90). We are

wandering gradually from Wordsworth, companion of leech-gatherers and poet in the language of men. But that too was half fashionable egalitarianism and only half the man himself.

The 1805 *Prelude* ends with the entire age in collapse, and hope existing only from an emotional need for it. He blames the crowning of Napoleon, but we have followed the decline of hope too long to need specious causes. He tries a rousing ending, but the language actually whimpers in a flush of qualifiers and resignation: "we shall still / Find solace," "if we may be," "firmer trust," "Should Providence . . . vouchsafe" (435-40), a dawn so clouded that the plaintive "surely yet to come" cannot pierce it.

Coleridge had him almost irreversibly turned inward to Platonic dreams and corruptions of the heart, not "Lodged only at the sanctuary's door" but "safe within its bosom. . . ." He had learned on his own that man had a silver side, an imperfectibility innate to him, a realization which gave the highest hopes no alternative to redemption. God demanded for merely the possibility of redemption that hopes for a perfected society be abandoned. Salvation is personal and exclusive. To his credit, Wordsworth struggled to retain the social dream, to apply the grace of a divine power to society as a whole:

Should earth by inward throes be wrenched throughout . . .
Yet would the living presence still subsist
Victorious; and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning--presage sure,
Though slow perhaps, of a returning day.
(*Prelude* 5.29ff)

If individual men, then universally, that the same result might obtain:

O heavens, how awful is the might of souls. . . .
 there's not a man
That lives who hath not had his god-like hours,
And knows not what majestic sway we have
As natural beings in the strength of Nature.
(3.178-94)

But only a divinity like Nature allows such hopes; God does not, and the more orthodox Wordsworth became, the more pessimistic his social views.

More deeply were Wordsworth's ambitions as a moralist hampered by his general misanthropy. He would like to love men; his developmental theory, his surrogate religion of Nature required it of him--"Retrospect: Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind" (subtitle of *Prelude*, book eight³⁰)--but he never learned to love anything but the idea of loving men. His stages of development, which should have led to philanthropy, and from that to a love of the divine, in fact arrive at something most unlike philanthropy in that MS fragment:

If upon mankind
He looks . . .
 what finds he there . . .
 but sordid men,
And transient occupations, and desires
Ignoble and depraved. . . .
 From mankind,
Like earlier monk or priest, as if by birth
He is sequestered. . . .

And he decided to leap past this failed step in development right into the more ethereal Platonic climes promised to come.

The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and which I loved and revered,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Living in time and space, and far diffused.
In this my joy, in this my dignity
Consisted. . . . (*Prelude* 8.761ff)

More than the others, Wordsworth was a solitary, with all the natural aversion of an introspective mind to an unthinking world. The abstracting of man frees the moralist to continue disliking men while rapturing about mankind without feeling a contradiction. It allowed Wordsworth to express openly his contempt for the "vice and folly," the "sport and ridicule and scorn" of the residents of London (*Prelude* 8.643-44).

³⁰He changed "Mankind" to "Man" for the 1850 *Prelude*, but only to improve the rhythm of the line.

He could follow Coleridge and write poetry, like "The White Doe,"

far too spiritual . . . for instant or widely spread sympathy, but not therefore the less fitted to make a deep and permanent impression upon that class of minds who think and feel more independently, than the many do. . . . (note, 1843)

This poem he considered his best work because pervaded by a "pure and lofty Imagination" (ltr. to Wrangham, 18 Jan 1816), and precisely because it was not written in the "language of men."

By *The Excursion*, he can blithely assume the stance of Gray's "Elegy":

Oh! many are the Poets that are sown
By Nature; men endowed with the highest gifts,
The vision and faculty divine;
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse . . .
 these favoured Beings,
All but a scattered few, live out their time,
husbanding that which they possess within,
And go the the grave, unthought of.
(1.77-91)

Now "favoured" means a special innate poetic imagination; they are, in fact, unfavoured by circumstance. Gray had intended an egalitarian message of the potential of men, but this only succeeds as a novel or unpopular idea. Wordsworth's use of the same notion in a world already reared on egalitarian and perfectibilist doctrines gives it the opposite effect. The presence of innate qualities, when presented as not universal, of course denies perfectibility. It does so, significantly, without reference to Christianity. He may be unconscious of the implication (though this is hard to believe, even from Wordsworth), but I rather think that past forty years of age and in a post-Napoleonic world, he had much to encourage and little to combat his natural misanthropy.

In some unused lines for *The Ruined Cottage* (1798), Wordsworth had stood for perfectibility on the strength of association and Necessity:

Thus deeply drinking-in the soul of things,
We shall be wise perforce, and we shall move
From strict necessity, along the path
Of order and of good.

In the lesser world of *The Excursion* (1814), the passage resurfaces, showing the

damage of years:

We shall be wise perforce; and while inspired
By choice, and conscious that the Will is free,
Shall move unswervingly, even as if impelled
By strict necessity, along the path
Of order and of good. (4.1265ff)

This has lost coherence. The freedom of the will influences our movements to or away from virtue certainly, but what does the inspiration of choice itself have to do with it? Or for that matter the simple consciousness of a free will? The term "while" wipes these two items clear from the purity of our impulsion lest they infect, divert our unswervingness. Freewill hangs on the passage like a cartouche, to please or deceive, but no structural part of it. Wordsworth well senses the hostility of "choice" to hope, but the effort of "while" to keep it at bay strains, cracks the confidence of that hope.

So we may take the exalted hopes of the "Prospectus" (1806) to *The Excursion* (lines 47ff) as didacticism, as his effort at taking seriously Coleridge's call to inspire by elevating. We do well to recall the function of a prospectus in setting out the topics, hopes, and goals of the subsequent text. This text cannot be reconciled with the just completed "Peele Castle." Millenarian expressions actually flourished in his poems of the Napoleonic years, didacticism came easy after his own belief had died. Perhaps he had taken on the Coleridgean mantle of optimistic prophet, or bard in service of a nation at war. Yet, as he knew that his poems were not much read, perhaps a polarity between public and private verse and belief ceased to concern him, a sort of moral carelessness that comes from resignation.

Surely numerous combinations of these motivations, including a growing providential Christianity, worked in producing poems such as "O'er the Wide Earth . . ." (1809), evoking "the eternal laws / To which the triumph of all good is given," with the rather lame argument that ethereal hopes must seek what is true, "else wherefore should the eye / Of man converse with immortality?" (This is pure Coleridge.) In "Brave Schill! By Death Delivered . . ." (1809), justice for man arrives only after the grave (cf. "this world is the place where we find our happiness or not at all"). More resigned, more honest are "Andrew Jones"

(1798-1800) and "Inscription in a Garden of the Same" [Coleorton] (1811), poems before and after his most flattering years, where earthly justice is equally absent, yet divine promises seem remote and uncertain. Whenever he invokes Providence to bring justice--"The fork'd weapon of the skies can send / Illumination into deep, dark holds, / Which the mild sunbeam hath not power to pierce" (*Excursion* 7.834ff), it is a cry out of Keats' Cave of Quietude from Wordsworth himself. We agree with him that "Benevolence . . . nor borrows help, / Save at worst need, from bold impetuous force" (7.1030-31). Forced to contract with the superior power, the supplicant must accept the terms offered; so Wordsworth's surrender to Providence required a surrender of social hopes. Yet I have said that this was no great sacrifice for the Recluse, that even Coleridge had long before abandoned that pretense, admitting that Christianity meant blessedness for the few, the many deserving their misery. So while Wordsworth may shout forth in *The Excursion* to the few within hearing that all hopes for mankind had not died on the guillotine in France or the battlefields of Europe, still his own stiffening poetry betrays what words of hearty confidence may conceal.

Shelley was an equally lukewarm philanthropist regarding real reform. He claimed to be "a very resolved republican," but one "far removed from pothouse democracy," one in fact much like Byron: "an aristocracy of chivalry and refinement before an aristocracy of commerce and vulgarity . . ." (ltr. to Hogg, 7 Feb 1813). He does not assume perfectibility solely by removal of the bonds of custom and faith, though he often seems to speak of "the immense improvements . . . which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible" ("Preface" to "Julian and Maddalo," 1818). Like Wordsworth, he wishes at least hope and potential be available to all, or so he says in his evangelical robes (employing here his first use of the symbol of the moon as reason): "Ye all are human--yon broad moon gives light / To millions who the selfsame likeness wear . . ." (*R of I* 8.3.3222-23). Yet, if, with Byron, he shared a passion for liberty, he also, like Byron, stood firmly on the prejudices of his social class, above "the servile applauses of an inconstant mob" (ltr. to Hogg, 7 Feb 1813). Further, he was also a part of the general post-Napoleonic retreat from confident egalitarianism (e.g. Benjamin Constant).

Regrettably, Shelley's intellectual mistrust of the common people twined with the inevitable physical abhorrence as well. The pastoral life of aristocratic Sussex and the society of his peers, no matter how estranged he felt from them, ill prepared him ^{for} actual contact with the teeming multitudes he was so eager to liberate. The enormity of the world's misery he glimpsed for the first time in Dublin, and it overcame him. Like Mary and Claire, he recoiled from the working people of France and Germany on their first flight to the continent. He left Mary and Claire to comment on the "horrible and slimy faces" of the "uncleanly animals" they travelled with (White 1: 359-60), unwilling to admit a contradiction in his egalitarian principles. So does the flame pale when brought to the candle.

But I judge too harshly a denizen of the wasteland of dreams that Napoleon left behind; that Shelley should shine at all in a forest of pessimism ought to be commended. The Hunt circle of latter day Godwinians was an anomaly in a post-Napoleonic age. Keats was more of the new generation in his marked uninterest in social speculations.³¹ No necessitarian, he intimates neither belief nor hope of progress, of improvement of man or society. He rarely even alluded to the subject, which is most curious in any young man, especially in a age of thundering change and echoing theories. In "To Hope" (Feb 1815), for instance, we find no mechanism, not even a reason for hope, just hope itself, left to drift. Keats pursued the private, poetic, imagination with a steadfastness that precluded all but personal revelation, without even the pretense of revelation as prophesy or example.

The late Romantics perhaps felt not only the resignation of their own age but saw the speculative ground on man's potential already well, and futilely trod ahead of them. When Keats mentions in a letter to George and Georgiana that "Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind . . . in the greater part of the Benefactors to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness . . ." (19 Mar 1819), without ever pursuing the issue, it may

³¹precisely as a more self-interested generation followed, reacted against, the social radicalism of the 1960s.

be because Wordsworth had wandered this ground, fruitlessly, already:

Why is this glorious creature to be found
One only in ten thousand? What one is,
Why may not many be? What bars are thrown
By Nature is the way of such a hope?
Our animal wants and the necessities
Which they impose, are these the obstacles?
(*Prelude* 12.90ff)

CHAPTER III

FREEDOM AS LIBERTY

Mechanical Necessity (and its fellows--materialism and rationalism), had proved dictatorial rather than comforting, arid rather than fertile, and hostile to morality. It had to be fled. Escape may be sufficient in itself, self-justified, by challenging or otherwise reducing its effect on the individual (negative freedom). It may also come positively, by the assertion of a contrary, creative power, not one replacing Necessity universally, but claiming an autonomous, creative human power as well. These are the subjects of this chapter.

III.A The Means for Escape (Negative Freedom)

Negative freedom, what liberty may be wrested from a determined universe and an oppressive society, remains in its pure state the province of Byron. Among these poets, only he entertained the possibility that freedom from external determinants might be sufficient for the fullest expression of human potential, and his works are explorative of this freedom. Kant, in his *Grundlegung*, defines "the autonomy of the will," what I call negative freedom, as the basic freedom of man: "den dieser kann ohne Widerspruch keinem anderen Gegenstande nachgesetzt werden."³² Byron sought just this sort of autonomy, a free arena for the will, and he cleared such a space for himself by defiance. Among the other poets, Shelley was most active in distinguishing negative freedom. In fact, he ranged further than Byron, sweeping clear political, linguistic, and philosophical hierarchies as well as social. His wide-ranging skepticism "destroys error and the roots of error. It leaves . . . a vacancy. It reduces the mind to that freedom in which it would have acted but for the misuse of words and signs. . . ." Yet, like Kant and unlike

³²"the will cannot without contradiction be subordinated to any other object" (*Schriften* 4: 437). Kant, however, moved quickly on to liberty in obedience--"es sich frei nennt, als wenn es sich in Absicht auf die nämliche Handlung dem Naturgesetze . . ." (4: 456; "he calls himself free as he holds himself subject to the law of nature . . ."), that is, the individual will becomes the universal will--but only with its causal autonomy established first.

Byron, Shelley sought ultimately a clear field for the assertive mind to create, or recreate, a new order of obedience.

For Byron and Shelley, the first condition of achieving earthly freedom is a severing of those earthly bonds which entangle us before our wills are capable of choosing. First to go were those much battered scapegoats of the Enlightenment: family and society. In part, Byron had embarked on an empirical study, an investigation of the conditions from which the will needed to be free to express itself. He followed here the lead of those, like Defoe and Rousseau, who had brought this mode of examination to literature, isolating man to discover his true innate nature. Thus, his heroes are outcasts, shunned by the world (for not accepting its constraints) and shunning it (that they might discover the possibility of freedom): "Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt / From all affection and from all contempt" (*Corsair* I.271-72). In his own way, Byron paralleled the search of Keats and Shelley for earthly epiphany, but he recognized nothing of obedience to a higher or immanent authority. Freedom meant liberty from external powers, period.

To free the will Byron had to combat the oppressors of the mind:

I will war, at least in words (and--should
My chance so happen--deeds), with all who war
With Thought;--and of Thought's foes by far most rude,
Tyrants and sycophants have been and are.
(*DJ* IX.xxiv)

The mind suffers both from its own internal self-censorship--its sycophancy to habit and custom, its diversion by flattery, etc.--and from the direct tyranny of despotic government or divinity on the other. It is between these, at the social level alone, amoral and anarchistic, where freewill may contest for some power.³³

³³Heidegger also found the only true personal liberty exactly in this space between outer Necessity--"what one does"--and inner Necessity--the "transparent," the "ready-to-hand." Like a true son of Byron, he sees such freedom bought at the ultimate cost, at a recognition of separateness, the "anxiety" that flows over us when we overthrow purpose, goals, and, thus, meaning in life.

Don Juan floats without commitment (unlike Manfred), drifting from one society to the next. Wittgenstein has said that only someone who views an experience from outside can see the truth in it. Literature has always offered truth to its readers based precisely on this principle, and satire employs this most of all. In *Don Juan*, we are at one remove further even than usual third person narrative. Juan himself observes as much as experiences, passes along the surface of the societies he visits as much as within them. With each, he moves from being an innocent, generally uncomprehending observer on the surface of things (an innocent abroad) to sinking into the intimate, even dangerous, embrace of the society, before rising again and moving on. The narrator stands a level above Juan, two removes from the society being observed, and the reader stands at a third distance, though intimate with the narrator. This further distance characterizes narrative satire, in the tradition of *Don Quixote*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Candide*, and others. Byron surely found it congenial both for the negative freedom of the character, and for the freedom of the author from rigid constraints of plot, character, verisimilitude, and, especially, accepted morality.

This, then, is negative social freedom. Don Juan is determined by the fate (acting here as Fortune) which casually tosses him from one circumstance to another, and by his inner passions, which lead him equally passively to disaster or good fortune. Though a completely determined being, he knows negative social freedom: the freedom from dulling habit, custom, and the tyranny of expectations, from family, relatives, and society, and from governmental power.

From the beginning we find Byron in admiration of this ideal. Relieved at finding himself an undergraduate with income (money is a positive freedom) and the more important negative freedom of independence, he felt like, "a German Prince who coins his own Cash, or a Cherokee Chief who coins no Cash at all, but enjoys what is more precious, Liberty" (ltr. to Augusta, 6 Nov 1805).

Though all of Byron's work worries the subject of negative freedom like a terrier, in *Manfred* this rises to its climax. Like King Lear, Manfred is driven to total isolation by social rejection; like him as well, he chooses to exploit this opportunity to find out what man is and what freedom he might truly possess. Each opposes their naked will to the powers of the universe; both rise in statu^re

for that alone--Lear in understanding, Manfred in heroism--but neither is redeemed. Manfred categorically casts off the philosophical "lendings," received wisdoms defining man's limits in the world, coherencies which burden (and comfort) the will. As outlined by J. Drummond Bone (177), he rejects man's pastoral nature, in the figure of the Chamois Hunter (III.i); pantheism and "the 'Wordsworthian solution'," in the Spirits of the Place and the beauty of Nature (I.i); the "Faustian solution" offered by Arimanes (II.iv); and the religious solution of the Abbot (III.i).

Manfred traces the hero's rejection of all help and support on the grounds that they would demand some subordination of his self, that self which at one and the same time is his pride and his agony. The problem of the state of freedom is at the center of the drama.
...

Although I argue that Byron is a humanist, perhaps the only true humanist among the Romantics, still, when his views on freewill meet those of Dante, it is as an Augustinian facing an Aquinian. In *Purgatorio* (canto XVI), Marco Lombardo explains that men are not determined, that they are wrong to believe that any "cielo . . . tutto / movesse seco di necessitate."³⁴ Morality required freewill, and even if "Lo cielo i vostri movimenti inizia,"³⁵ still, you are "liberi soggiacete."³⁶ He differs from Augustine only in demanding that there exist a logical connection between freewill and culpability, that man can be blamed because he owns a reason which "tells right from wrong." St. Augustine (with Calvin, Kant, Coleridge, and Byron following in his wake) held culpability separate, self-justified as original sin, with freewill weighing only in ethical judgements in this life. While Dante was willing to give man rope to see if he be foolish enough to hang himself--"la cagion che il mondo ha fatto reo, / e non natura che in voi sia corrotta"³⁷--the Augustinians would allow God to make no deals limiting His power. They found comfort in the message that for all but the

³⁴"Law / . . . shaped all mortal actions in their course" (68-69).

³⁵The spheres *do* start your impulses along" (73)."

³⁶"free subjects" (79).

³⁷"The bad state of the modern world is due . . . not to natural corruption in you" (103-05).

few, the march to the scaffold begins at birth. Byron, early pressed into a Calvinist mold, indelibly scarred with dogmas of predestination and election, spent his career setting up a Calvinist universe (though heavily cloaked in myth and pagan classicism) that he might struggle against it, suffer under it, and generally pursue the possibility of freedom (or, more satisfyingly, prove the impossibility) of some manner of freedom within it. He suffered to prove Calvinism that he might defy it.³⁸

Marchand notes the contradictions of "Byron's liberal sympathies balanced against his aristocratic pride" (2: 841). Evidence of the latter, however, pervades all aspects of his work, while the former fades the closer one inspects it. Though more active and effective in social and political affairs than any of the other Romantics, it was neither from disinterested motives nor concern for the oppressed majority. Byron sought a sphere of action for the striving will. If this could be found in the cause of (some vague concept of) natural justice, as in Washington, then all the better. If it appears in the person of a tyrant, as in the latter years of Napoleon, then liberal sympathies would have to take second billing. Byron would set free the will regardless. Liberty meant no more than loosing the reigns of power at the apex, for the greater autonomy of the aristocracy or individual men of merit (the familiar Whig position of the aristocracy against the crown), or the aspirations of an entire nation (a sufficiently sublime concept). It never meant sharing any power with the bootblack. His attacks on the powers of reaction, except when associated with foreign occupations, are rare, and his political satires upon closer inspection seem more and more party political. Instead, the collapse of hopes for universal liberty in 1814-15 bothered him much less than the fall of Napoleon.

Byron differs from many German Romantics in the tales of the first half of his career by presenting not the moralist's advocacy of the will as agent of ethics but the pessimist's flight into the autonomous individual, not the moral man of will

³⁸although the sense of being fated predates his defiance: "every error stamps me for her own, / And dooms my fall . . ." ("To the Duke of Dorset" 39-40, 1805), or "'Tis done!--I saw it in my dreams . . . Chill'd by Misfortune's wintry blast, / My dawn of Life is overcast . . ." ("Remembrance," 1806).

(as in Schiller and Keats) but the amoral man of will, as Schiller offers in *Die Räuber*:

Pfui! Pfui über das schlappe Kastratenjahrhundert. . .

Das Gesetz hat zum Schneckengang verdorben, was Alderflug geworden wäre. Das Gesetz hat noch keinen grossen Mann gebildet, aber die Freiheit brütet Kolosse und Extremitäten aus.³⁹

Heroes were his speciality:

Unlike the heroes of each ancient race,
Demons in act, but Gods at least in face,
In Conrad's form seems little to admire,
Though his dark eyebrow shades a glance of fire. . . .
 his rising lip reveals
The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.
(*Corsair* I.ix.193-206)

This is recognizably Milton's Satan (definitely not Prometheus), as Byron pointedly tells us of Conrad's poetic reincarnation, Lara: "He stood a stranger in this breathing world, / An erring Spirit from another hurled . . ." (*Lara* 315-16). Reliant on his own resources alone, he confuses his morality exactly as does Oswald in Wordsworth's *The Borderers*. Byron, like Wordsworth, explored the consequences of morality entirely self-justified: "he at last confounded good and ill, / And half mistook for fate the acts of will. . . ." Byron, I am sure, ever self-aware, winks at us here, hinting that he well knew his own fatalistic world-view was in part show.

Yet the exploration of morality is quite serious. Deeper than just the rejection of society, the spurning of morality itself is Satanic. Byron did not venture this far; even in the "Turkish Tales" his message remained essentially moral. That is, acting against society's morality is moral if society is deemed corrupt. This is the world of satire, Byron's first love. A revolt against morality itself, against the heart, he does not *venture*.

³⁹"Fie! fie upon this weak, effeminate age. . . . Law has distorted to a snail's pace what could have been an eagle's flight. Never yet has law formed a great man; 'tis liberty that breeds giants and heroes" (I.ii).

The "Byronic" struggle against Fate, in all its restless, futile glory, we find in the deathbed work of that great Byron admirer, Delacroix. His *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (1861), the stubborn fury of Jacob, both as hero and as everyman, against the impassive, quietly immovable angel is Byron's view of freedom. It may be found in Géricault and Turner, and in the popular image of Beethoven.

In his useful work on the subject, Peter Thorslev discusses the various manifestations of the hero as he appeared in the Romantic age, seeing Byron as paralleling the German Romantics and most proximately a part of the English "gothic" style (Scott, Radcliffe, etc.). I would like to propose another figure of great importance to Byron: the Roman Stoic. As an odd cauldron of Calvinism and Enlightenment humanism, the former in Byron seems to overpower the latter; but I suggest even in those aberrations in his output, the "Turkish Tales" and *Manfred*, the heroes stand on a bedrock of Stoic virtue. The Roman Stoic, portrayed by Horace, Juvenal, Virgil, and others, was deeply impressed on young public school minds:

1.

The man of firm and noble soul
No factious clamours can controul;
No threat'ning tyrant's darkling brow
Can swerve him from his just intent:
Gales the warring waves which plough,
By Auster on the billows spent,
To curb the Adriatic main,
Would awe his fix'd, determin'd mind in vain.

2.

Aye, and the red right arm of Jove,
Hurling his lightnings from above,
With all his terrors there unfurl'd,
He would, unmov'd, unaw'd, behold.
The flames of an expiring world,
Again in crashing chaos roll'd,
In vast promiscuous ruin hurl'd,
Might light his glorious funeral pile:
Still dauntless 'midst the wreck of earth he'd smile.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Byron, "Translation from Horace," pub. 1807. This is the Stoic at his most Byronic to be sure, hence the dispute between Pope and Dennis over this very ode.

Here we have an apocalyptic, sublime (see "Darkness," Jul 1816), and tyrannous Omnipotence met by unshakable will and a "sneer of cold command." Byron only need add to this a personal (Calvinist) guilt and estrangement from society (the poet as hero, or prophet) to produce a Conrad or Manfred. Scott, Milton and the rest may be brought in for details alone. Most importantly, as I will show, his remained an essentially Stoic ethic throughout his career.

The Byronic hero serves as a paradigm of human freedom, just as the poet-as-hero of Keats, Wordsworth, or Shelley becomes a 'Platonic' archetype of the potential of human imagination. The Byronic hero therefore is not Everyman, no more than is Endymion, Alastor, or Wordsworth's scruffy peripatetics. But he does stand in for all men, as an example for them, for the human will struggling with the divine, a champion of mankind. In contrast, the poet of imagination in Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth leaves mankind behind in his personal quest, travels on alone. Byron denies his hero a transcendent realm; the Byronic hero must remain on the earth and of men. And though he may be a misanthrope, his vehicle for freedom, the will, does not remove him from his humanity as the imagination promises to do. Byron's hero is Man fallen, not man ascending. Though he is like Milton's Satan, he is not Miltonic, for Milton struggled to prove freewill against predestination and Byron to prove both.

In Goethe's dramatic fragment, "Prometheus" (1773), the enchained one haughtily refuses Zeus' offer of a seat among the gods and rule over earth. His brother, Epimetheus (meaning "Afterthought" as Prometheus means "Foresight") asks him what more he could possibly want. He answers like Manfred:

Der Kreis, den meine Wirksamkeit erfüllt!
Nichts drunter und nichts drüber!--
Was haben deise Sterne droben
Für ein Recht an mich,
Dass die mich begraffen?⁴¹

That is, the freedom to be his own Fate, autonomous, an uncaused cause, negative freedom.

⁴¹"The realm which my affects fulfill! / Nothing beyond and nothing below! / What authority over me / Have the stars above / That gape on me?" (I.77ff).

Thorslev observes (173ff) that the Prometheus of Aeschylus and of Shelley is surrounded by friends and sympathizers, and may count on his all-conquering ally, time, while Manfred remains alone, dependent on none, befriended by none, facing the eternity which Prometheus is spared. In "To the Duke of Dorset" (1805), "Lines: Addressed to the Rev. J. T. Becher . . ." (1809), and "I Would I Were a Careless Child," Byron describes a youthful predilection toward such isolation, what I might call aristocratic hauteur, "by nature, haughty, wild" (37), fashionable melancholy of the Werther sort: "My breast requires the sullen glen, / Whose gloom may suit the darkened mind," or vague misanthropy, "I seek to shun, not hate mankind . . ." (stanza 7).⁴²

The Byronic hero as victim of tyrannous divine powers, which culminates in *Manfred* and *Cain*, first appears in "Prayer of Nature" (Dec 1806). Here also sprouts the first clear guilt in the poetry, not personal guilt, but the Calvinist guilt of original sin. The "Prayer" is, typically, accusation not supplication, lifting up newly for Byron the old issues of the nature of evil, the injustice of original sin, and divine toleration of evil and suffering.

Hyperbole defines youth, so if Byron should make a "Weltschmerz" out of his feelings at age eighteen we should not be surprised. Yet in him, when the despair resurfaces in similar form in the adult, we look back to the early expressions and take greater notice. I have identified all the basic characteristics of the Byronic hero without reference to the Terror, Napoleon, incest scandal, or the Congress of Vienna. Only the unnamed guilt remains, the special gloom of Childe Harold. I can speculate that the presence of "guilt" in the "Turkish" heroes derives directly from the success of *Childe Harold*, Byron tapping a popular formula. What personal guilt he carried into *Childe Harold* may be accounted for in Scottish Calvinism and the indiscretions of Nurse Gray. (The Augusta incest happened either as an effect of guilt or a sought-for cause to append to a pre-existing guilt).

⁴²In reality, isolation Byron generously defines as being surrounded by a smallish circle of friends and lovers; most of the time his household was thronged with visitors, servants, and other diverse occupants.

The "Turkish" tales (*The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, etc.) came during the years of popularity, of a consuming social life, and of deep immersion into gothic drama through his connection with Drury Lane. Daily and in diverse ways the expectations and fashions of the public were reinforced in him. Once the public had jumped into bed with Childe Harold, the Turkish tales, or picaresques, came naturally to a poet swept suddenly into a giddy dance with popularity, aware of what the public wanted (and having an especial sense of what excited women, his greatest readership), and seduced into giving it to them. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, though the hero himself wears the dark robes of popular "gothic" melancholia and adventures through exotic climes, in style and attitude only slightly diverges from the satiric mainstream of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, *The Blues*, *Beppo*, and *Don Juan*. But Harold and the exoticism aroused the public, and though Byron had penned *Childe Harold* casually, partly as satire or didactic tract, partly as travelogue, he grasped the moment, instantly abandoning his natural discursive satiric voice and leaping through the suddenly open window of popularity.

The flattering attention and social sycophancy showered on him he both loved and loathed, though his writings continued to cultivate it. It was only when he felt compelled to escape his marriage, hurried along by the incest rumors, that he allowed his submerged misanthropy to surface, along with his contempt for the hypocrisy and cant of the society he had so recently encouraged. Only then did he spurn England and flee. He needed a guiding (or pushing) hand, being constitutionally crippled at deciding for himself, but once escaped from the demands of a society he had not the strength to resist (which both oppressed and sustained him), he returned to satisfying his poetic (rather than social) needs. In the historical dramas he developed a dry and direct style, reflecting classical austerities and unities, the very antithesis of the indulgent gothic. Of the works after the exile which might be called "gothic," only *Manfred* deserves the name, and it came under the spell of Shelley and *Faust* and a scant nine months after *Parisina*, with the gothic not quite exorcised. The others, even if "metaphysical," are in fact, far more classical or biblical in style and form.

He also shook free from the amoral hero, the literary device of villainy contemptuously dropped. A driving restlessness remained, but it turned its

energies to a passion for justice. Prometheus, Japhet, Cain, and the great men of the historical dramas cast into disgrace the self-pitying likes of Lara and the Giaour. They are joined by those ennobled by a Christian-like martyrdom: Bonivard, Tasso, and Mazeppa. By standards of Christian ethics, all of these rise above moral reproach; there is not a guilt among them (even Cain's crime Byron ensures we see as an effect, not a cause).

The Siege of Corinth, written in the spring of his departure suggests the change, shows the noble defense of a moral order. A new morality (a return to the Christian ethics of his early works), even a didacticism--"A mighty lesson we inherit . . ." ("Prometheus")--sweeps over the poems immediately following the exile and remains. *Childe Harold* III (May 1816) begins with the same "wandering outlaw of his own dark mind" he left us with in canto two, but we immediately sense a greater introspection (e.g. vi and xiv). Byron is not the least unaware of the change--Harold now proceeds "with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond prime" (xi). Bonivard (*The Prisoner of Chillon*) appears as Byron's first protagonist taken from history (another new development) and he makes the startling observation, to those who knew only his popular works, that he sought "to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues." We cannot ignore Byron's age and understandable feelings of world-weariness, feelings only further dampened by the exhaustion and despair of a destitute Europe, wasted of hope. In sobriety, in satiety, Byron crossed Europe, himself at an age of taking stock, disentangling himself from "juvenile errors"

Childe Harold, as a traditional Man of Sentiment or Feeling, had half embodied the vulnerability of Byron's early poems in cantos I and II, and perhaps more than just a return to travel prompted Byron to resurrect him. Innate restlessness and resistance to oppression immediately takes a softer tone, more of victimization than defiance, in the images of canto III: "As eagerly the barred-up bird will beat / His breast and beak against his wiry dome / Till the blood tinge his plumage" (xv). (Byron powerfully confirms here also his conviction that the urge for freedom lies as an innate, natural, even animal compulsion, far more interfused and powerful than human choice.)

The new Byronic hero, with guilt and suggestions of vice replaced by a noble morality, appears full-fledged in "Prometheus":

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate. . . .
("Prometheus," Jul 1816, II)

Here is a hero without the failings of the others. Though a god, he still typifies the new moral hero, ennobled and redeemed in suffering, his powerful will turned to the pursuit of justice. This merging of divine attributes and mortal suffering is new; it had not been Byron's practice to idealize virtue (excepting love).

The moral hero then dominates the subsequent works, especially the historical dramas, with satirical variations in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. Only Manfred breaks from this new morality, but he does so only halfway. He combines the guilt, the sublime implication of past villainy, and the suggestion of Satan or Satanism of the picaresque heroes, with the clear voice of moral conviction crying against injustice. Manfred gleams at times with the golden thread of heroic transcendence--only a glimpse, which Byron of course does not pursue. Enough that he affirm the Promethean quality of defiance, negative freedom, justified in itself: "Triumphant where it dares defy. . . ."

III.B Mortal Power (Positive Freedom)

Byron leads the unhappy company of poets and intellectuals toward the modern age under the dreary skies of what Peckham calls a "negative romanticism."⁴³ It was in this role that Matthew Arnold could carefully praise the Quixotic "passionate and dauntless soldier of a forlorn hope," while finding the poet less admirable.⁴⁴ In Goethe's "Prometheus" (1773), Epimetheus argues with his brother:

Du stehst allein!
Dein Eigensinn erkennt die Wonne,
Wenn die Götter, du,
Die Deinigen un Welt und Himmel all
Sich all ein innig Ganzes fühlten.⁴⁵

The full horror of this must not be underestimated; in rejecting religion, the heroic will condemns itself to total vacancy, pointlessness, an eternity of senseless pain. Aeschylus and Shelley sustained Prometheus by his foresight of his eventual triumph. This is fortitude, not heroism. It is a lesser thing to that which embraces an eternity of hell as the price for temporary freedom of the will now. But such a hero was Faust, Milton's Satan, and Manfred.⁴⁶

Byron was certainly a fatalist, if by fatalism we specifically mean being convinced that events are ruled by Fate. On the other hand, he can hardly be so described if the term is used in the popular sense to imply any sort of resignation

⁴³"Toward a Theory of Romanticism," *PMLA* 56, 1951, 5-23.

⁴⁴*Essays in Criticism*, "Byron"; *Works* 9: 236. More so than in Byron, but not exclusively, did European pessimism lead to fatalism. No less than Schopenhauer wrenched his philosophy of matchless hopelessness around to point it at a moral philosophy of good works and virtue (even among philosophers does philosophy go begging before emotional needs). Still, both men defined morality in terms of heroic, because futile, defiance, which put both into the difficult position of self-negation, that is, having the will deny itself (in Byron it denies its own self-determination).

⁴⁵"You stand alone! / Your obstinate will foregoes that bliss, / When the gods and you, / Your works, the world, and the heavens all / Feel a blessed inner wholeness" (I.82ff).

⁴⁶This company might have included Shelley's Zastrozzi but that Shelley did not believe in hell.

(even Stoic acceptance), any enervation of effort or will faced with the futility of its efficacy. Thorslev observes, in *Romantic Contraries*, that a life under Fate "does not of itself deny the existence of freedom of the will . . . rather it frustrates will of its effects in action" (21). As has been suggested already, the effect of a fatalistic "Weltschmerz" was, in fact, liberating for Byron. Again, we must look to classicism and to the drama of gesture and pose which is life, to understand Byron: "Oedipus is undoubtedly the most 'fate-ridden' figure in literature, but he is not a fatalist. Had he been a fatalist, there would have been no drama" (161). There have been at least two major species of humanism. Byron allied with the stubborn, pragmatic humanism of the pre-Platonic Greeks and with the mixture of practical vigor and pessimism of the Romans and English Elizabethans, rather than the loftier sense of human possibilities of the Italian or French Renaissance or the Enlightenment.

We have seen how English necessitarians such as Priestley and Godwin interpreted Necessity as a power man could use as well as suffer, could make an ally if he properly applied his reason. Necessity underlay science, making the "laws" of Nature laws and thus usable. Only through Necessity did the will have power over Nature.⁴⁷

Positive freedom requires power, and for men to have such freedom, they must take some of the power which in a totally determined universe is reserved for the gods. Beyond the original gift of Prometheus of a most basic technology, man suffered the want of any substantial power in this world, not excepting classical civilization, until the scientific revolution of the sixteenth century. Suddenly, Nature showed herself as law, subject to Necessity and knowable, and with the recognition that knowledge meant power and power freedom, men escaped from under the thumb of Providence (Fate) to a freedom over his mortal destiny. Faith, beginning with medieval tales such as the Faust legend, has been fighting a rearguard action ever since. Necessity, once the proof of Providence, became the engine of science, gaining importance in her apostasy. Periodically,

⁴⁷See Priestley's *Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity*, 8.99-100, for the proof that only under an assumption of Necessity could a man know a "confidence of success in all his labours."

and especially with the Romantics, the neglected doubts and fears of men will rise up in revolt, Christianity and paganism ally against materialism, revealing their common source in the unfulfilled needs of the heart.

We have seen how negative freedom meant chains we "burst and rend in twain" that we might walk "as free as light the clouds among . . ." ("Dedication," to *R of I*). Wordsworth celebrated the freedom of the mortal will from "the meagre, stale, forbidding ways / Of custom, law, and statute" (*Prelude* 10.694-95), and he assumed power would then flow naturally. He recalled the moment with a flurry of words of action: "mighty were the auxiliars," "assert her rights," "making of herself," "going forwards," "wake," "rouzed," "plastic," and "exercise their skill;" it was to be efficacious, not "inert" (10.689ff). Vanquishing what Shelley calls "all the the oppressions which are done under the sun" ("Preface" to *R of I*), from tyranny to faith to habit, was thought by most as sufficient. Man would then ascend to his glory like an untethered balloon. But with the Terror and, for the late Romantics, the supine acquiescence of the oppressed of Europe to the restored monarchies in 1815, even dreamers like Shelley had now learned that it was tyranny which would, must, fill a "vacancy." From negative freedom alone, men allow evil "control / Over their will by their own weakness . . ." (2.731-32), and "How should slaves produce any thing but tyranny--even as the seed produces the plant?" (ltr. to Mary, 10 Aug 1821). Instead, a positive freedom was needed, one not just assumed as universal to human nature, but specific, prepared for, and revelatory. And since in the decades following the Revolution, the People had demonstrated no such power, if it is to exist at all it must be select and exclusory. Only as such could "fresh light from Hope's immortal urn" be now seen as "A Tale of human power" (1.647-48). Keats had never mistaken otherwise; when, for instance, he argues for negative freedom, "many have original minds who do not think it--they are led away by Custom," he only refers to the few with a real, if nascent transcendental power of the imagination. This would then act in concert with a more universal moral power in the heart, a "spirit and pulse of good" (ltr. to John Hamilton Reynolds, 19 Feb 1818), to produce the Promethean man.

Only Wordsworth, when writing to his own mind, rests comfortably in the commonsense view of positive freedom: simply pursuing a life in harmony with our natural purposes, freed from external (to society as well as the individual)

determination. He always carried himself with a full sense of personal freedom, "loving freedom . . . being to myself a guide." His was a passion for the free exercise of his pleasures, born of his undemanding childhood and spacious surroundings, and exemplified in his early desire to become a traveller's companion. His poetry abounds with wandering folk and independent thinkers, those Romantic obsessions all characterized by at least the appearance and conviction of positive freedom in this life. Even as his own fatalism grew, he wrote with sympathy of the proud human will. "The Childless Father" (1800) tells of man's fate to live a linear life in a cyclical, renewing world--the same theme as the "Matthew" poems. Yet this man chooses to go forth from his isolation, seeking to partake in the world of rebirth from which he will always be excluded. He has chosen life. "The Matron of Jedborough" (1804-05) has made the same choice (perhaps not "choice," but preserving an animating fire), and she flutters about in gladsome contrast to her moribund husband, "her helpless charge." He is normality, the passive receptacle of life's decay, she the persistent, defiant will. In the dancers of "Stray Pleasures" (1806), the living will escapes the crush of reality, lights the twilight, as their barge takes them into the evening ocean. But this did not amount to transcendence and failed to satisfy Coleridge, Shelley, or Keats, and half the time not even Wordsworth. It was this other Wordsworth, the Coleridgean one, who proved so influential.⁴⁸

III.B.1 The Surpassing Will

The will of man is the central motive force in Dante's theology. Not only do men face judgement based on their willed actions, but in the afterlife their will becomes the ruling force. The souls newly arrived in Hell clamor to get in (*Inferno* III.123) and are propelled across Acheron by their own desperate yearning for that very punishment they so fear. Dante makes it quite clear that the damned will their state, and get what they will. Likewise, in Purgatory, the penitent will their suffering gladly and advance by their own choice (*Purgatorio*

⁴⁸We also can see immediately in "The Matron of Jedborough," how bumbling Christianity can bludgeon what had been a triumph of human resources.

XIII.103). (They obey the "absolute will" of the good, not the "relative good" of conscious wants, of course. So does Aquinian philosophy circumvent the passions with the right reason, for they arrive with a "relative" will to ascend immediately, but know they must await the learning of a harmony with the true will of God.) In Paradise, all will is concordant with the divine, all will is the Love of God. In Christian theology, Aquinian or Augustinian, all will which is not in harmony with the will of God opposes God and is sin (for this was Pride made the deadliest sin). Byron's heroes are driven by what Archangel Raphael, in *Heaven and Earth* (Oct 1821), says drives Satan: "his burning will" (I.iii.566). In opposing Fate in a Christian universe they oppose God. When the Stranger (Satan) promises Arnold, in *The Deformed Transformed* (summer 1822), that he "shall have no bond / But your own will, no contract save your deeds" (I.i.151-52), Byron leaves us in no doubt of the sinfulness of this within Christianity. So he cannot endorse the striving for a purely autonomous will when Christianity demands otherwise and still call himself a Christian. When he does, we are bound to disbelieve him.

The "Byronic" will, as we know, was essentially Germanic,⁴⁹ and a Romantic extraction from the secular Enlightenment:

Wir Subalternen haben keinen Willen,
 Der freie Mann, der mächtige allein
 Gehorcht dem schönen menschlichen Gefühl.
 Wir aber sind nur Schergen des Gesetzes,
 Des grausamen, Gehorsam heisst die Tugend.
 Um die der Niedre sich bewerben darf.⁵⁰

As with all mortals, of course, even Wallenstein 'obeys' both his inner determinants ("his . . . human impulses") and lacks the power to thwart outer Fate. Few reflective men may seriously advocate absolute, "existential" freewill.

⁴⁹though we find it independently not only in Byron, but, for example, in Montesquieu, who implies the will of the great man when he speaks of the masses as "ceux qui sont dans un tel état de bassesse, qu'ils sont réputés n'avoir point de volonté propre" ("such as are of so mean a station as to be deemed to have no will of their own" *De l'esprit des lois*, 1748, I.xi. sec. 6).

⁵⁰"We subalterns have no will of our own: / The free, the mighty man alone may listen / To the fair impulse of his human nature. / Ah! we are but the poor tools of the law, / Obedience the sole virtue we dare aim at!" (Schiller, *Death of Wallenstein* IV.i.2507-12; Coleridge trans.)

Gordon speaks here of social freedom, of a man's power over the people and events of the practical world.

Between outer Necessity or Fate and inner, organic Necessity, the dominating will struggles to wedge itself a space for the exercise of power, some negative freedom. If it may do so, and only the greatest can, Byron grants it positive freedom as social freedom, power over men. Napoleon, he tells us, wielded a will triumphant over the world, yet remained a vassal to both inner and outer Necessity (Fate): "An Empire thou could'st crush, command, rebuild, / But govern not thy pettiest passion . . . / Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest Star" (*CH* III.xxxviii). Freedom here, though seeming of great import, may be more theory than fact, a phantom visible only by ignoring the greater powers trapping man between them; yet Byron lashes all his hopes to it. Secondly, Byron grants the very highest will also a power, if not to defeat Fate, at least briefly to usurp its authority. The Doge in *The Two Foscari* (summer 1821), recognizes that in reality, "we are slaves, / The greatest as the meanest--nothing rests / Upon our will; the will itself no less / Depends upon a straw than on a storm" (II.i.357ff). But then he dies heroically, like Manfred, defiant of death, both men choosing the manner of their death, though death itself was fated. If the will cannot will the "what," it might demand a say in the "how" or the "when." (This makes no philosophical sense, but it is quintessentially Byronic, and very human.)

The hero might achieve a sort of transcendence on earth if his will was virtuous, as in Shelley's and Byron's Prometheus. In Nietzsche's Superman, through his inner struggle, an ascetic inner cleansing, the will ascends to its highest power through moral purity, this all before that power manifests itself externally. In Byron, the will comes closest to transcending corporeal limits when suffering, a condition Wordsworth linked to virtue. Not for Byron, however, Wordsworth's vacuous abandoned virgins, nor even typically, Prometheus, though he did suggest a redemption in suffering (see chapter five). Transcendence may be implied in the will as it embraces not only virtue, but all of worth in life itself. In "On the Star of 'The Legion of Honour'" (Apr 1816), he says that but for the will as engine of hope and virtuous deed, "Our life is but a load of clay." But considering all which I have said regarding Byron's intense distrust of anything

transcendent or incorporeal, he would never make very much of this. Similarly, Keats, a milder spokesman for the will, kept it even more firmly rooted in the mortal world. Against Godwin and the utilitarians, he argued for the autonomous individual: "every human might become great, and humanity instead of being a wide heath of furze and briars, with here and there a remote Oak or Pine, would become a grand democracy of forest trees" (ltr. to Reynolds, 19 Feb 1818). Byron cared even less for the perfectibilist vision; in its absence, both poets happily celebrated the freedom of the assertive will of the "remote Oak or Pine." Goethe, under no inhibitions concerning transcendence, gives to the chorus (in Penthalis) the truism (which we have just seen in Montesquieu): "Wer keinen Namen sich erwarb noch Edles will, / Gehört den Elementen an. . . ." ⁵¹ By implication, the striving will escapes, in some manner, our mortal state.

Without granting Napoleon authorship of the concept of the heroic man in Byron or Keats--I have already offered gothic and Roman models--the figure of the Corsican striding across Europe did embody the reality of it. Byron confesses to Moore: "It is impossible not to be dazzled and overwhelmed by his character and career" (ltr., 27 Mar 1815). Yet an early importance must remain conjecture, interpolation from later works, for Napoleon enters Byron's poems and letters only after the disaster of the Russian campaign, and from then variously as a symbol of the failed or fallen hero. He writes to Annabella Milbanke:

Buonaparte has fallen--I regret it--& the restoration of the despicable Bourbons-- the triumph of tameness over talent--and the utter wreck of a mind which I thought *superior even to Fortune*--it has utterly confounded and baffled me. . . . (20 Apr 1814, emphasis added)

It unravelled his pretensions of hope for freedom through the individual will. (Yet as I have said, Byron required futility, which his relative silence on Napoleon, until his fall, reinforces. Despite what he says here, or perhaps paralleling it in his schismatic mind, he needed the religious affirmation of a Fate ultimately omnipotent.)

⁵¹"He who has earned no name, nor strives for noble things / Belongs but to the elements . . ." (*Faust* 2: III.9981-82).

Byron briefly grew irate with Napoleon immediately upon his fall; the "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" (Apr 1814) carries all the satire and invective of a believer disillusioned. If lasting freedom of the will was not confirmed for the greatest of men (not to mention permanent social benefit brought to Europe), then wherefore all of the slain? Byron recoils before the legions of the dead as one who suddenly sees in the slaughter no purpose, no gain. Many liberals shuddered for the absence of Providence, many for the liberty still unpurchased by that blood, Byron for these plus the will itself shown as mortal as its victims. Three sorts of higher purpose had died on the battlefields of Europe.

Yet Napoleon was too great a figure to ignore, and too "heroic" even in his temporary power. He had demonstrated the highest social freedom, power over the material world; for this Manfred and Faust were sorcerers and Napoleon and Tamburlaine generals. He molded the face of Europe in his own image, acting briefly as Fate itself, so Byron could not but confess to Lady Blessington that "I find fault, and quarrel with Napoleon, as a lover" (Blessington 120). If further demonstration were needed to put to rest any doubts as to where the greatest weight of Byron's heart lies, whether with social humanitarianism or the individual will, his stormy love affair with Napoleon should conclude the issue. As Knight observes: "Napoleon, however tyrannic, lifts mankind; [Henry] Hunt and Henley, however justified, drag man down" (225-26). If you are looking for the freedom of individual man and you deny spiritual transcendence, where else do you look but to a Superman?

The truly heroic will, then, must determine others and must itself be determined only by Fate (inner and divine Necessities). In the post-mortem of Waterloo, Byron grants Castlereagh and the allied powers only "the luck which Providence is pleased to lavish" (ltr. to Moore, 7 Jul 1815). Wellington he at first tries to elevate to semiheroic status--"He is a man"--but only, I suspect, to avoid lowering Napoleon in the comparison. In the end, though, he too was in part a tool of Moira, in part a yelping jackal dispatching the already wounded lion: "However, he may thank the Russian frosts, which destroyed the *real élite* of the French army, for the successes of Waterloo." That is, the real conquerors of

Napoleon were the powers of Nature.⁵² The Moira theme appears again in "Ode from the French" (Mar 1816). Only when "lone Tyranny commanded" and "goaded by Ambition's sting, / The Hero sunk into the King," only "Then he fell" (II). Insofar as Napoleon's striving was the pure exercise of his will, he was unconquerable by men. Once hubris and self-interest dominated him, once, that is, once he ceased to serve morality, he became just another tyrant ("King") and necessarily the victim of Nemesis.

This brings us to the second positive freedom of the Byronic hero: his limited victories over Fate. Napoleon, we have just seen, wished to act as Fate itself over Europe (an ambition exceeding Manfred's assertions of sovereignty over his personal destiny alone), a hubris of dramatic proportions. Byron owed much to Renaissance tragedies (though dismissing Shakespeare, he borrows or quotes from him exhaustively), as Drew discusses, pointing to such as Marlowe's Barabas (*The Jew of Malta*) or Tamburlaine: "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn fortune's wheel about" (I.ii.173-74). Tragedy Marlowe defined much as did Byron, as the inadequacy of man's state to his conceptions. Drew concludes: "The tragedy of the Marlovian hero is the tragedy of all men who think they are free . . ." (65). And as the quotation from Schiller above suggests, only the great man of surpassing will claims earthly freedom (or so tragedy assumes), and only he has even a hope of achieving, or approaching it. But the conventions, the emotional needs, of classical tragedy demand that usurped Moira be restored, and Byron interpreted the Napoleonic saga exactly as a tragic drama, that is, where both human potential for brief but suprahuman social freedom (i.e. power) and higher (even if malicious) purposeful omnipotence are affirmed: "I have warred with a World which vanquished me only / When the meteor of

⁵²Much later, the image of the Emperor settled into his niche in the noble pantheon and Byron, anyway, had travelled out of the mountainous country of heroes and back into society. Then, Wellington no longer enjoyed the rarefied air of the great man's company, and Byron booted him back into gutter with Castlereagh. See *DJ* IX.1-5.

conquest allured me too far" ("Napoleon's Farewell," Jul 1815).⁵³

Conscious, certainly, of the evil potential of the dominant will, of the Christian proscription of pride, Byron never offers an amoral or immoral hero not eventually consumed by ravenous Nemesis. Christian morality, Nietzsche had rightly said, exists only for the weak to restrain the strong, but Byron, for all his strong characters, was never ready to dismiss this protection. He was after all, as he well knew, himself an inescapable member of the weak, the sheltered company. Still, the Byronic hero exists for the admiration of his freedom, his morality being a not always necessary adjunct. The tenderness of Conrad mixed uneasily, unconvincingly, with his misanthropy and bitterness; when he becomes Lara, the tenderness has all but vanished. Manfred, though resolutely moral, shows no softer nature; love serves him as scourge.

Briefly upon his departure from Britain, thankfully escaped from the amoral picaresque heroes, the failure of Napoleon a fresh disappointment, he turned from the individual to the community will. Even as he approached Geneva, Rousseau's "general will" arose in his mind as the heroic image of a small community of freemen, acting in concert as a virtuous Washington would act individually, "a proud, brotherly, and civic band" (*CH* III.lxiv). He interprets the battles of Marathon and Morat in this light, a nobility of cause and purpose to contrast to the senseless butchery of Waterloo. He does not dwell on this vision, too ideal and selfless for his temperament, but it shows his temporary dissatisfaction with the individual will and his searching for an efficacious morality.

So momentous were the events of 1814 through early 1816, internationally and personally, that tracing influences in Byron's work is difficult. Certainly, though, the failure of the one supreme hero of the age nobly to confront his destiny to the end, to die as his beloved Old Guard had died, must have driven Byron into

⁵³Wordsworth appears to take the will beyond this, mostly in the "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty," (especially "Call Not the Royal Swede Unfortunate" and "Look Now On That Adventurer Who Hath Paid," of 1809), but these are wartime, patriotic, didactic tracts and not to be read for serious philosophy.

historical heroes: "methought, the living great / Some higher sparks should animate . . ." ("Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," Apr 1814, xii). This poem, written after the first abdication, hints at where Byron was heading. We are presented with a pageantry, a roll call of all those of history who played the part better. These could not betray his vision for them (revisionist historians being few), and they best combined the flexibility of fiction (Byron could remake them almost as he pleased) with the authority of fact (important when you wish to offer even the pretense of a social or moral message). *The Siege of Corinth* pointed the way away from the picaresques and toward the moral histories; soon to follow were the tales of unimpeachable figures like Bonivard, Tasso, Mazeppa, and the moral, if more humanly ambiguous, protagonists of the historical dramas.

The historical dramas explore the possibilities of freedom for the virtuous hero on earth, in this life. Byron could look through history (especially as it has always be weighted to the great men) and see in Roman, Swiss, and American models how the upright man of virtue, the stoic aristocrat, could bring liberty and glory both. Of modern Greece, he asks: "and when / Can Man its shattered splendor renovate, / Recall its virtues back and vanquish Time and Fate?" (*CH* II.lxxxiv). Such a tall order may only be answered by heroes: "When Grecian mothers shall give birth to men. . . ." Shelley, when young, would have answered with the mere removal of chains, Coleridge, at any age, with the Christian millennium.

Byron's archetypal moral hero was an historical figure: Sulla. His one act of walking away from overwhelming power strikes Byron as the ultimate act of will, an act which wrests for that one moment destiny from the grip of Fate. Sulla, like Manfred, spurns Moira at the instant she is ready to swoop.

Augustus . . . Was he a great Man? Assuredly.--But not one of *my* great men--I have always looked upon Sylla as the greatest Character in History--for laying down his power at the moment when it was

"too great to keep or to resign"

and thus despising them all. (Journal, 1 May 1821)

The difference with Napoleon is evident (though Napoleon partially redeemed

himself with his resurrection from Elba. This in itself is something of a usurpation of Fate's power for those hundred days). Byron himself mimicked Sulla in kicking up his heels at England and English society while still hugely popular, and going into exile.⁵⁴

At times even Sulla's act of will does not satisfy Byron. In a Journal note of 24 November 1813, despite being between the writing of *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair* (or perhaps because of it), Byron falls into a moral longing: "To be the first man--not the Dictator--not the Sylla, but the Washington or the Aristides--the leader in talent and truth--is next to the Divinity!" Of course there is more pride of class and elitism in this than virtue, and no disinterestedness, but it both shows that Byron felt morally responsible enough to know that the will alone does not suffice, and suggests how much the "Turkish" tales misrepresented him.

The historical hero we find less eager to assert his will for its own sake, more concerned with justice and moral justification, yet undimmed in aristocratic pride:

yet I find a comfort in
The thought, that these things are the work of Fate;
For I would rather yield to Gods than men,
Or cling to any creed of destiny,
Rather than deem these mortals, most of whom
I know to be as worthless as the dust,
And weak as worthless, more than instruments
Of an o'er-ruling Power; they in themselves
Were all incapable--they could not be
Victors of him who oft had conquered for them.
(*Marino Faliero* V.ii.65ff)

In each of the historical dramas, in one way or another, the hero plays "the Roman part," that one act of grasping his own destiny, as did Sulla.

Cain and Arnold are moral sufferers rather than heroes in the former sense,

⁵⁴Or so he fantasied. In fact, his popularity was already waning; he almost consciously manipulated events so that he would feel driven out; he never felt his absence irrevocable; and he not only had not sacrificed his writing but wrote better and more to his own taste than ever before. By most standards, his life markedly improved, not declined in exile.

and the decline of the Byronic hero as a figure of defiant, positive, freedom is complete. So much does his hero dominate Byron's writings and his ethic, that he must preface *Don Juan* with immediate excuses for the unheroic qualities of his character and with an explanation of why this antihero is appropriate. "I WANT a hero," he opens famously, "an uncommon want, / When every year and month sends forth new one," echoing with cutting irony the lines of Rosse from Macbeth telling of the griefs of Scotland: "each minute teems a new one." Byron goes on to elaborate: "Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant, / The age discovers he is not the true one," and the reference here is to the concept of a messiah. He is telling his public that they live in an unheroic age, slamming in the process the current crop of leaders and of literary heroes. Also, after three years of moral heroes which the public hardly noticed, knowing that he was still thought of in terms of the picaresques, he recognized the need to thump the public over the head with his new approach that they do not further mistake him.

He is also pointedly rejecting the notion of poet-as-hero. Childe Harold was one such, both he and Juan members of the wandering, exile, brood of Ahasuerus, Io, Alastor, Endymion, the Ancient Mariner, the leech-gatherer, etc. But Childe Harold fled the gadfly of his guilt, an inner Necessity, which allies him with the egocentric Romantic mainstream. In a post-*Beppo* world, Byron gives his wanderer over to the gusts and crags of sublime society rather than the Alps (inner or outer) or lawlessness. The poet uses him to explore freedom in this world, and in both tales the narration follows the similar pattern of gradually disintegrating plot as the narrator increasingly digresses. But Juan evinces no observable freedom at all, nothing that happens does so by his choice. He is an antihero, but not in the modern sense where when heroes must be moral, the antihero is a villain; in an age of gothic villains the antihero is moral. He is also "anti" the heroic type in a second vital quality by lacking a transcendent will. Don Juan is will-less, passive, a blank slate, and thus a perfect vehicle for satire, a *Candide* or *Tom Jones*. Of heroes, he says he "can't find any in the present age / Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one); / So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan" (I.v.).

III.B.2 The "Act"

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife
Throughout the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.
(Mordaunt)

Fichte it was who took the Kantian "self" and made it the great engine of freedom: He

formulated an ethic and social philosophy in which the idea of Freedom was central and sounded the note of "egoism." . . . Fichte held the vocation of man to be the creation of a moral order in which essential human rights and duties could be fully exercised. True individuality and personality were to be attained only in a nation in which man engaged in a constant struggle towards unattainable goals. (Gutmann 209)

A doctrine of self or will meant individualism, man fully expressive of his powers, free from external control. It does not exclude society--in fact, through Schopenhauer and Hegel it was to race on to its antithesis, pure socialism--but Byron remained back where it still meant the individual opposed to and by society.

The "act" in Fichte becomes the act of the self in creation of its world. In the "First Introduction" to the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1797), he asserts the need for human destiny to be fulfilled by action, that men cannot think of themselves as objects, even in part, but as subjects only (sec. 7). Coleridge likes to think of motive or creative forces in spiritual terms:

a spirit is that, which is its own object, yet not originally an object, but an absolute subject for which all, itself included, may become an object. It must therefore be an ACT; for every object is, as an *object*, dead, fixed, incapable in itself of any action, and necessarily finite. (*BL* 1: 12.184-85)

This is not only Coleridge's idealist mind in an "echo of the infinite I AM;" it is

the creation, the continuing and recurring act. "Im Anfang war die *Tat!*",⁵⁵ says Faust and, as he tells Mephistopheles, the burden of the deed rides on him: "Wie ich beharre, bin ich Knecht. . .".⁵⁶ Byron, whose bubbles of will ceaselessly must rise against the weight of ocean, agreed in his own way, but a way retaining the duality, the opposition, of man and universe which idealism unifies. There is no room here for Keats' pure stasis, of Platonic or Christian wholeness. Fichte and his followers affirm that the will (like the electron) exists only in motion.⁵⁷ When Faust tells Mephistopheles to take him if ever he were to wish for "zum Augenblichke sagen" to "verweile doch!"⁵⁸, he refers to a version of the Romantic death wish. Positively it is a transcendental, Keatsian, "death" as fulfillment, total realization; but negatively, to Byron and the Fichteans, it represents the struggle for freedom, for life itself, having stopped (as in the husband of Wordsworth's "Matron of Jedborough").

When Coleridge talks of "going further" than Hartley, that he believed in "the corporeality of *thought*--namely, that it is motion" (ltr. to Southey, 11 Dec 1794), this seems where he was heading. Associationism, as a theory of the active mind, could have its foundations of materialist Necessity demolished and a new idealist base built under the same superstructure, which is what Coleridge set about doing. This was the idealist psychology, still raw but already modified to give the mind's power ultimately to God, that he revealed to Wordsworth. Wordsworth, characteristically, made it more pantheist, but the conception remains the same: "a motion and a Spirit that impels" not only "All thinking things," but "all objects of all thought . . ." ("Tintern Abbey"). This may seen in its clearest essence in the aesthetic imagination: "a Shakespere, a Milton, a Bruno, exist in the mind as *pure Action*, defecated of all that is material & passive" (*Notebooks* 2: no. 2026).

⁵⁵"In the beginning was the Deed!" (I.1237)

⁵⁶"Once come to rest, I am enslaved" (I.1710).

⁵⁷though there remains an unresolved dialectic in Fichte, that is, a contradiction between this and his Christianity, from which he advises religious contemplation, his "intellektuelle Anschauung," (Gutmann 209).

⁵⁸"the swift moment" to "Tarry a while," I.1700-01.

We have seen Hume's denial of any knowledge of causal connection shake Necessity, make it suspect, a poseur, belief in which was an act of faith. Fichtean idealism makes it disappear entirely. In the endless joining of subjects and objects, perceivers and perceived in the act of perception, the very idea of "being" separate from the act of perception becomes meaningless. When "the spirit [or self] in all the objects which it views, views only itself" (*BL* 1: 12.184), then the distinction between actor and acted upon vanish, that is, causation itself. In this phenomenal world of mind, knowledge is something

that is in and of itself at once cause and effect (*causa sui*), subject and object, or rather the absolute identity of both. . . . a self-consciousness in which the principium essendi does not stand to the principium cognoscendi in the relation of cause to effect, but both the one and the other are co-inherent and identical. (*BL* 1: 12.187)

Only the "act" of attempted unity between subject and object has any reality for Fichte, nothing "is," there is no "being," all is "becoming." Coleridge found this more useful to his Christianity than pure Kantian skepticism, but halted shy of the sacrilege of making the noumenal world solely an object of the self (the self as subject).⁵⁹

The British are ever more cautious metaphysicians, ever more tied to practicality. If Coleridge balked at the boldness of Fichte on the creative mind, so did Byron, the great exponent of the assertive will, claim much less for it than Schopenhauer (his exact contemporary). Of course, a philosopher is bound by the demands of his profession to complete a concept; a poet is not. This poet, in fact, needed incompleteness, uncertainty, and futility. Schopenhauer was pessimist enough to darken even Byron's gloomy sky; they shared a conviction of an indifferent, even hostile, universe--the philosopher's "wille" seeming malicious from its huge, unthinking indifference--and of man's tragedy as the inadequacy of his state to his conceptions. But in his shattering, if ignored, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Idea*) of 1818, Schopenhauer imagines a

⁵⁹For a middle ground between the pure idealism of Fichte and the empirical skepticism of Kant, between the active imagination of Keats and striving will of Byron, see Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807, V.B.2.a, "Die Lust und die Nothwendigkeit" (*Gesammelte Werke* 9: 198-99).

unity of all powers into one (his "wille" perhaps equalling the "energy" of the physicist), so that the race of galaxies, the fall of an apple, and a human thought are but its various expressions. Byron, however, clung tenaciously to the individual will against the onrush of such unifying philosophies.

Even Shelley abandoned action in the practical world, though like the rest not entirely burning the bridge behind him. Byron viewed the bridge as unsafe, the far country too obscure, and remained in the practical world. Byron's "act" was act, not an epistemological theory. He was as Faust; it was better, perhaps, that a man act to moral ends, but most important that he act. Byron and Goethe, both Enlightenment men, both valued the self only in its conflict with the empirical world:

The great object of life is Sensation--to feel that we exist--even though in pain--it is this "craving void" which drives us to Gaming--to Battle--to Travel--to intemperate but keenly felt pursuits of every description whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment. (ltr. to Annabella, 6 Sept 1813)⁶⁰

So it was that he would return to Britain to lead a revolution; if not, then Italy or Greece. It hardly mattered, as he loved "a row," being on "the savage side of the question" (ltr. to Kinnaird, 14 Apr 1820). Philosophically, this is indeed his self seeking itself in the world, the will racing after self-expression.

Nothing of freewill here, it is an inner Necessity we have seen forcing its way to the surface even in the boy. In an anger against his fellows at Harrow, he writes his mother of a need to rise above them, conquering by superior deeds and power:

the way to *riches* to *Greatness* lies before me, I can, I will cut myself a path through the world or perish in the attempt. others have begun life with nothing and ended Greatly. And shall I who have a competent if not a large fortune, remain idle, No, I will carve myself the passage to Grandeur, but never with Dishonour. These Madam are my intentions. . . . (May 1804?)

Shelley reacted to similar pressure with a retreat into the self and an affirmation

⁶⁰See also *CH* III.xlii.

of high ideals.

This inner Necessity, "that rash humour which my Mother gave me," Byron describes it (quoting from *Julius Caesar* IV.iii), something "that makes one restless & nervous--& can overthrow all tranquillity with a Sirocco" (ltr. to Hobhouse, 8 Jun 1820), must oppose rational thought as a motive to action. Its insistence on the exercise of power also outfaces reason's recognition that in a determined world there is no possibility of real power. But if reason argues for the pointlessness of human effort, then reason must be ignored: "Surely you agree with me about the real *vacuum* of human pursuits, but one must force an object of attainment--not to rust in the Scabbard altogether." This answers for Shelley's lament over the "vacancy" of experience. He makes the same point in "Ode on Venice" (149-50, Jul 1818) and disputes with such as Keats in *Don Juan*: "Bards may sing what they please about *Content*; / *Contented*, when translated, means but cloyed" (XIV.lxxix, Jan-Mar 1823). Cain was driven to his crime "from mere internal irritation," not reason (i.e. "premeditation"), which, he says, sounding like Hegel, "discharges itself rather against Life--and the author of Life--than the mere living" (ltr. to Murray, 3 Nov 1821).

He can rise to a near Hegelian vision of the self realizing itself in history (also Shelley's Necessity in destiny), here speaking of the anticipated Italian uprising:

But onward!--it is now the time to act, and what signifies *self*, if a single spark of that which would be worthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchedly to the future? It is not one man, nor a million, but the *spirit* of liberty which must be spread. The waves which dash upon the shore are, one by one, broken, but yet the *ocean* conquers, nevertheless. (Journal, 9 Jan 1821)

But perhaps rather this sounds of the marching feet of French armies of the 1790s and justifications for the slaughtered youth of Europe. In Byron this is specious, and given that it comes from his gesture to posterity, the "private" Journal, we ought doubly to distrust it.

In fact, Byron did not, could not, act with dedication and resolve, in concert with men. Decisiveness was not Byron; he ever held back, waiting for others to lead, even act, that he might support them. In the hesitant and fatalistic attitude of Marino Faliero with the conspirators, Byron reveals for us enough to

understand his own position and failings as the Hamlet of the Carbonari. He might well write to Hobhouse that, in considering the next stage of his life, "philosophy would be in vain--let us try action" (20 Aug 1819), but it was never quite that easy, whatever his assertive intentions. He was ever most unhappy when faced with the ambiguity of real choice, most confident and fiery once choices had been made and his fate was decided. Then, with futility confirmed, he could rise in opposition. For example, in the uncertainty surrounding the separation, as Byron awaited the lawyers to decide the issue:

For several days Byron's moods were alternately up and down, but on the 17th the basis for the legal separation was agreed upon, and on the 22d Hobhouse found him "in great spirits at prospect of going abroad directly." . . . A devil-may-care mood seized him. (Marchand 2: 590-91)

Not that he desired the separation--he both needed and bitterly resented it--but that choices had been made for him. Now he had something to oppose and resent, which he did; now his oppressors had taken up the role he thrust upon them. The same attitude marred his taking up the marriage as did this casting off. And he sought not just to shift blame to others. He manipulated and squirmed that he might evade culpability in the eyes of others, but ensured then that he might inflict much of it back on himself. He employed the mixed subterfuge and self-punishment of an unhappy child. Now, driven from his marriage and country by his own hidden and indirect hand, he could play the unwilling exile. Lament as he must, he would never have allowed these two decisions to go the other way.

Now, having abused him, I will claim for Byron that however it ran against his nature he remains the one Romantic who had, and knew he had, real power in the world. He employed his rank, money, and the influence that comes with popularity in the House of Lords and in the causes of liberty in Italy and Greece. His actions were generally inconsequential, but his mere presence lent considerable weight to such adventures as his theatrical descent on Greece. Most important of all, and perhaps most ironic, Byron, the least accomplished poet and intellect of the major Romantics, exceeded them all in power echoing across the ages to come. Only Shelley, when playing at Cobbett, and Coleridge, when pamphleteer and preacher, felt they had real influence over their times. Wordsworth wandered into revolutionary notions as he wandered across France,

out of dull curiosity and the hormones of a young man. Coleridge and Southey imagined they could escape into the wilderness, less an example to mankind than misanthropy mixed with a sense of futility. Keats, the most honest, being the humblest born, hardly even pretended a concern for effect on the world. He admired willful "Men of Achievement," but pursued only his own fame (though he called himself to account for lack of beneficent action in the world before Moneta, i.e. memory as remorse, in *The Fall of Hyperion*). Romantics generally worked first for their goddess, poetry. Yeats compared Byron with Oscar Wilde, seeing both as men of action waylaid into poetry. This totally mistakes Byron's implacably passive, motherless, nature, and in doing so, fails to grant him the full credit he deserves for managing some efficacy against his own inner Necessity by actually managing to do something.

III.B.3 Idealism

The Chameleon darkens in the shade of him
that bends over it to ascertain its colours.⁶¹

Locke had directed his materialist sensationalism against the Cambridge Neo-Platonists of his time, pushing to open fully the door to empiricism which the rationalists had been trying to shut. But as all things human run in cycles, one century later two rationalists of the seventeenth-century mold, Kant and Coleridge, struggled again to close that door, which had seemed to let in moral and social decay when it admitted material progress. Contention between materialism and idealism pivoted on the active powers of the mind, its complicity in perception, as in Leibnitz's response to the claim that nothing exists in the mind but what was once in the senses with the pregnant reply, "except the mind itself." Coleridge, dragging Wordsworth, rushed to join the rationalists and idealists--dangerous allies for theists and pantheists--in crusade against materialism.

⁶¹Coleridge, "Moral and Religious Aphorisms," no. 7, *Aids* 83.

Stalwart nonidealists were the pessimists, Keats and Byron, pessimists because worldly men. Keats, of course, was not so worldly in his poetry, which played in the mind, remote from practicalities, and he insisted that he be distinguished from Byron in this regard: "There is this great difference between us: he describes what he sees--I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task; now see the immense difference" (ltr. to George and Georgiana, 18 Sept 1819). Yet, though an undoubted champion of the creative imagination, his was an aesthetic, and through imagination a transcendental faith; it was not an epistemology. In a letter to Bailey (13 Mar 1818) he speculates on a peculiar, personal sort of idealism, a relativism that is modern, but one poorly considered. The only "idealism" important in Keats is the mind's imaginative power to unify Coleridgean extremes and make the dream a reality.

The material world itself he denies neither existence nor the possibility that it can be known. He remains, by strict definition, a materialist, even where he seems to suggest the opposite. Even here he makes no more than the poet's necessary claim that the imagination gives meaning, perhaps purpose, to the external world:

who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit
 would swell [t/o]
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet
If human souls did never kiss and greet?
(*Endymion* 1.835)

He desperately wished the reconciliation of material (sensual) and spiritual, too practical, too little educated in metaphysics to ever see the "real" as Plato's ideal or Kant's nomenon. He felt reality directly on his pulses, a pungent draught in his senses, and sought to bring the spiritual to this, not the reverse. In "Ode to Psyche" (Apr 1819), he insists that the soul (Psyche) be something he can "see," something which is "by my own eyes inspir'd," even if only its effects, as the wind across an aeolian harp or a field of grain. Only when sensible, when felt, can he "be thy priest, and build a fane. . . ." Yet he wishes a building, a material thing, nonetheless located idealistically "In some untrodden region of my mind." So we

are left with Keats as neither firm materialist nor true idealist, but right where he always may be found, in the tortured center, straining to bring the stubborn extremes to unity.

Byron's "metaphysical" works seem to toy with idealism; perhaps his hopes for the will tends him toward it. In *Cain*, Lucifer certainly is an idealist. Byron allows him to carry the power of the mind in its defiant will to the extremes of idealism. Lucifer tells Cain that immortality may be had,

By being
Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing can
Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself
And centre of surrounding things--'tis made
To sway. (l.i.212ff)

Advice that comes from Lucifer is not, in Byron, proof of its error or evil. This attractive idea Byron believes up to a point, certainly insofar as the mind's power may be defined as will. But idealism only brings frustration to Cain, and we notice that the Devil in "The Devil's Drive" (202) finds idealist philosophers a fertile source of converts.

The times spawned many a Christian idealist: "Mental things are alone Real[;] what is Calld Corporeal[,] Nobody Knows of its Dwelling Place[;] [it] is in Fallacy & its Existence an Imposture" (Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, 1810; *Works* 2: 1027). Like Coleridge and the Germans, Blake seeks reality purely in the self: "I assert for My self that I do not behold the outward Creation & that to me it is hindrance & not Action[;] it is as the Dirt upon my feet[,] No part of Me," but like Coleridge also he takes idealism (via Platonism) only as far as heresy allows. He observes in Wordsworth exactly what Coleridge had been telling him and what Wordsworth himself came to realize: "Wordsworth must Know that what he Writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature" (marginalia, 1826, to Wordsworth's *Poems*, 1815; *Works* 2: 1511).

As I have discussed in chapter two, Kant had rebuilt causal necessity not from the knowledge of it, which Hume had forever banished, but from the need for it first, and from this to the necessity of it. Morality required that our actions have necessary and predictable effects, and the moral nature of God demanded that His actions in the world have universality and Necessity. Kant had made

causation one of his categories of the mind's ordering of the world, the one of the twelve he placed under "Relation" and called "ground" and "consequence."

For this reason, more than any other, both Coleridge and Kant were always quite satisfied to accept causation in the material world, even if we could never know anything more than that it exists and that it works by strict Necessity. Never shy about incongruities where the divine was concerned, Coleridge happily supported rationalist proofs with seventeenth-century empirical evidences: "Look round you and behold everywhere an adaptation of means to ends" (*Friend*, 1818; *Works* 4: 1.516). He hardly could resist proclaiming the glory of God in His creation. Moreover, he needed the affirmation of stability and order (i.e. purpose). This drove his conservative politics, as in his attacks on playwrights (the heirs of Beaumarchais) who he felt flattered the public, exciting in them untoward aspirations by "the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things in their causes and effects" (*Friend*, 7 Dec 1809; *Works* 4: 2.220). His use of the phrase "causes and effects," describing social classes as he might the planetary orbits, says much about the extent to which he was happy to see Necessity, as the Providential arrangement of the world, extended to all areas but the moral will itself.

So Coleridge's more radical idealisms cannot be taken at face value: "the notion of cause and effect belongs to Logic--to the arrangement of our thoughts, and dare not be supposed in nature, or rather cannot without contradiction in terms" (marginalia, 1810; qtd. in Levere, 101). Rather, we should place him not only with Kant, in affirming that we cannot know the truth of causation. We must accept

as fundamental facts, and therefore of course indemonstrable and incapable of further analysis, the general notions of matter, spirit, soul, body, action, passiveness, time, space, cause, and effect, consciousness, perception, memory and habit. . . . (*BL* 1: 12.162-63)

We assume by logical proofs that they must obtain in the noumenal world.

Empiricism, despite Coleridge keeping it in the closet for his own use, as a means to truth had fallen mortally before the sword of idealism, the active mind. Coleridge had a deep antipathy to Newtonian induction anyway, because it

seemed to look at particular laws rather than for a universal power and it limited the search to the testable. Now he had a weapon against it.

Newton was a mere materialist--*Mind* in his system is always *passive*--a lazy *Looker-on* on an external World. If the mind be not *passive*, if it be indeed made in God's Image, & that too in the sublimest sense--the Image of the *Creator*--there is ground for suspicion, that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system. (ltr. to Poole, 23 Mar 1801)

Shelley made a similar move away from materialism, for similar teleological reasons. The mind, Shelley decides: "is not merely impelled or organized by the adhibition of events proceeding from what has been termed the mechanism of the material universe" (*Speculations on Metaphysics*; *Works* 7: 62).

Kant, demonstrated the existence of freewill based on the same moral need that shelters God and immortality, that is, that moral discourse is possible only if we assume that men are free agents. Fichte, having made the same journey as Coleridge and Shelley from necessitarianism to transcendentalism, travelling for similar Christian reasons, plunged into Kantian idealism with as great a joy at the rebirth of freewill and morality. In a letter to his friend Achelis, November 1790, at age 28, he sounds very much like Coleridge at a similar age (in 1799-1801):

Ich warf mich in die Philosophie, und das zwar--wie es sich versteht--in die Kantische. Hier fand ich die Gegenmittel für die wahre Quelle meines Uebels, u. Freude genug obendrein. Der Einfluss den diese Philosophie, besonders der Moralische Theil derselben . . . auf das ganze Denksystem eines Menschen hat . . . ist unbegreiflich. . . . ich jezt von ganzem Herzen an die Freiheit des Menschen glaube, u. wohl einsehe, dass nur unter dieser Voraussetzung Pflicht, Tugend, u. überhaupt eine Moral möglich ist.⁶²

The revelatory tone recalls the English Romantics' raptures over Godwin's own "religious" philosophy, though now it is over an escape from Necessity. In a letter

⁶²"I threw myself into philosophy, and, as you know, into the Kantian. Here I found the remedy for all my evils, and joy enough to boot. The influence of this philosophy, and particularly the moral part of it . . . upon the whole spiritual life . . . is indescribable. . . . I now heartily believe in the Freedom of Man, and am well convinced that it is only on this supposition that Duty, Virtue, or Morality of any kind, is so much as possible. . . . (*Gesamtausgabe* 3: 4193)

of 15 January 1804, Coleridge praises Poole for resisting his earlier necessitarian arguments. His confession to Poole--"Your uncorrupted moral feelings guided you more truly than did my arguments"--means the same in a Kantian context as Fichte's slightly more dispassionate and rational confession to his betrothed, Johanna Rahn: "Ich sey jetzt gänzlich überzeugt, dass der menschliche Wille frei sey. . . . Achelis hatte doch Recht, freilich ohne es zu wissen, warum Glaube nur hinfort an Dein Gefühl. . . ." ⁶³ The concept of the active mind, and Kant's exposition of it, proved to be the key to sunlight and open air for a whole generation of intellectuals once hopelessly incarcerated by ironclad Necessity. ⁶⁴

In the MS Y fragment, "We live by admiration," discussed above, where Wordsworth offers his own version of Hartleyan stages of development, he allows even in the very first unfocused gaze of the newborn, a synthesizing, idealist power of the mind. The "soul," that is, immediately begins to "half-create" the perception (the mind and soul are one, the soul as consciousness). The mind is "watchful" and "eager" and effectively unifying that which was "else detached / And loth to coalesce," that is, to begin to synthesize the particular world of the senses, the phenomenal world, into the universal, eternal truths of the noumenal, spiritual, even Platonic realm. This first and most simple synthesis relates to (and through Coleridge may be influenced by) Kant's level of "concepts." On the second level, that of selective receptivity, the child becomes able to bring the half-created unity to a higher, Kantian generality, that of "categories." Throughout both of these stages, the baby grows, half by associative mechanisms, half from its own innate organic power:

day by day
 Subjected to the discipline of love,
 His organs and recipient faculties
 Are quickened, are more vigorous; his mind spreads,
 Tenacious of the forms which it receives.
 (*Prelude*, 1799, 2.281ff)

⁶³"I am now thoroughly convinced that the human will is free. . . . Achelis was right,--without knowing it indeed; and why? Henceforth believe in thy feelings . . ." (ltr., 5 Sept 1790).

⁶⁴Mostly German; see Coleridge's "Satyrane Letters," *Friend* no. 3; *Works* 4: 2.243.

This suggests how association might live in an idealist philosophy, ideas combining by the mind's own power, not mechanically. Coleridge and Shelley could then drag association into idealism dressed in a revelatory epistemology, and Coleridge continue to speak of "the excellent and pious Hartley" (*BL* 1: 7.84). Coleridge could forgive him particularly as in the second book of his *Observations*, offering "proofs of the existence and attributes of God . . . he makes no reference to the principle or results of the first." This proved that materialism did not lie nearest his heart, and "no errors of the understanding can be morally arraigned unless they have proceeded from the heart." Coleridge forgives him as he does Godwin, with the empathy of one who knows how the head may mislead the heart.

Even in view of the Cambridge Platonists and Berkeley, even with its agreeable compromise with associationism, idealism generally sat uneasily in the British empirical mind. It is true that sufficient native idealism existed that the Romantics need not be products of Kant. In fact, whatever of Kant or Fichte crossed the channel prior to Coleridge's trip to Goslar came surreptitiously or indirectly enough as largely to escape scholarly notice. Coleridge certainly drew heavily on the Cambridge Platonists as a young man. His borrowings from the Bristol Library in 1796 included Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, 1678, which argued for *a priori* knowledge, the "self-active" character of thought, and a mind with "its own native vigour and activity." Kathleen Coburn believes that Cudworth "helped to release Coleridge from associationism and necessitarianism" (*Notebooks* 1: Notes 203n). Without doubt, Coleridge in 1796 was in search of such help. "Frost at Midnight," composed the year before the trip to Germany, like its contemporary, "Tintern Abbey," unambiguously argues for a creative, idealist mind: The mind's power gives life to a flame, animated but otherwise lifeless,

Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

Here is the imagination as the Fichtean self seeking itself in the external world.

None of these poets as adults would admit to materialism, though Byron comes close,⁶⁵ yet none but Coleridge could be considered true idealists. Kant, nonetheless, provided a theory of mind, epistemology, and ontology, for those wishing to take idealism for more than he had intended (e.g. Fichte and his followers, including Coleridge). Because the external world could not be divorced from the perceiving self, and given the authority of that self (as heart), then "deep Thinking is attainable only by a man of deep Feeling, and . . . all Truth is a species of deep Feeling, of Revelation" (Coleridge, ltr. to Poole, 23 Mar 1801). All the Romantics generally agreed. Coleridge, we have seen, insisted on God, but Wordsworth and Shelley likewise required an external reality with implied, if not actual, power.⁶⁶ This is the well-known "Tintern Abbey" position (1798):

all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts. . . .
(106ff)

Both perceptions and what the mind makes of perceptions are valid and in concert produce the moral being. This theme of half perceive and half create dominates the poetry of Wordsworth's middle years. In the 1799 *Prelude*, a child lives "by admiration" (by the power of admiring, implying subject and object):

Emphatically such a being lives,
An inmate of this *active* universe.
From Nature largely he receives, nor so
Is satisfied, but largely gives again;
For feeling has to him imparted strength,
And--powerful in all sentiments of grief,
Of exultation, fear and joy--his mind,
Creates, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds. (2.295ff)

Wordsworth had not meant what "half create / And . . . perceive" seems to mean, that is, that the mind does only half of the work, with a teleological Nature

⁶⁵See *DJ* XI.i-ii.

⁶⁶See Shelley's "Speculations in Metaphysics"; *Works* 7: 60-61.

or other divinity providing the other half of the mind's food. Rather, the mind "Creates" totally, all of the power being its own (though perhaps of divine origin, organic Necessity in the Coleridge manner) in the manipulations of sensations which it half creates and half perceives. This leaves the external world extant but passive. Passive, perhaps, but divinely ordered and harmonious with the mind's efforts: "How exquisitely the individual Mind . . . to the external World / Is fitted:--and how exquisitely, too . . . The external World is fitted to the Mind . . ." (*Excursion*, "Prospectus," 63-68).

Shelley arrives here himself in his exploration of Berkeley (and Platonism), to an epistemology strongly suggestive of Wordsworth, though unique. He seems to stop short of pure idealism, however, affirming that the mind "cannot create, it can only perceive." Shelley recognized as clearly as any the dangers of the ego, of the mind as sole or ultimate power:

Some moon-struck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his own. . . .
(*R of I* 8.3244ff)

The "Brocken spectre" struck Coleridge as a revelation of the mind's power, but by Shelley, idealism had begun to demonstrate its dangers. Shelley here ridicules the mind's pretensions to authority in rationalism as well as idealism. Shelley's "moon"--unlike Coleridge's which is the watchful divine "eye"--stands for cold rationality, the "mirror" only, of truth. A few stanzas later, the mind as "mirror" appears, not as a causal power itself, but the sheet upon which the moving hand writes, "the book of fate." In *The Triumph of Life*, the "Brocken spectres" we all impose on the world's reality become the phantoms of our errors (479ff). Beyond death, we are naught but Lucretian "simulacra," not becoming the Platonic real, but remaining images on the cave wall.

But he only seems to oppose Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Kantians, for simultaneously, matter he claims is but a component of thought; or as he says in "Speculations on Metaphysics": "when speaking of the objects of thought, we indeed only describe one of the forms of thought--or that, speaking of thought, we only apprehend one of the operations of the universal" (*Works* 7: 65).

this Whole
 Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
 With all the silent or tempestuous workings
 By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
 Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams;
 Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
 The future and the past are idle shadows
 Of thought's eternal flight--they have no being.
 Nought is but that which feels itself to be.
 (*Hellas* 776ff)

He speaks in Wordsworthian tones here, and if the words tell of complete idealism it is in the Wordsworthian mode: the mind creates the world of itself and for itself. It is in this way that Shelley calls the mind the "circumference" of all things. The entire world of the mind, all that it embraces, its entire world, it creates within its embrace. In this way is "thought" "the measure of the universe" (*PU* II.iv.73). But so too is the mind the "centre" of all things; there is a noumenal world out there, upon which the mind feeds as insects upon a leaf, as Coleridge tells us, until it is tinged the color of that upon which it feeds. The mind encircles all that it can know of the world as well as being the focus, the gravicentre, of that universe of things that impact upon it.

III.B.4 The Poetic Imagination

the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression - whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open . . . all leading to dark passages . . . We feel the "burden of the Mystery." To this point was Wordsworth come . . . when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey,' and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages. (Keats, ltr. to Reynolds, 3 May 1818)

In *The Prelude*, the imagination comes to the fore as not only the most active creative power, but as the dominant force determining the character of all sense impressions (note especially 2.265-73 and 2.246-50). With the rise of the power of the imagination in his epistemology, Wordsworth finally enters the Romantic movement. Havens notes: "This revolutionary conception of the imagination . . . is the theme of *The Prelude*" (206). For Kant, the imagination was the power of

the mind which turned sensual impressions of the most simple kind ("intuition") into cognitive ideas of objects in the phenomenal world. Wordsworth's concept of the imagination (from Coleridge) goes further, as the active agent of the associative mechanism, becoming both the greatest determinant of the nature of simple sensations, as well as the force helping to combine these into more complex ideas of objects and the relations of objects into harmonious and moral order. It includes both associationism and Kantian epistemology and helps unify them into the Wordsworthian concepts of the mind's moral development. This moral power was Keats' point in the quotation above. Further still, it was always more than a psychological idea, more than an understanding of the workings of the mind; it was also the vehicle of faith. It was with language of religious conversion, or rather, reversion to an earlier more true belief that he describes his recovery from the grip of rationalist morality (*Prelude* 11.250ff). He "shook the habit off / Entirely and for ever," in the sense both of renouncing holy vows and stripping off the clothing of custom and self-limiting thought.

Here Wordsworth borrows Coleridge's distinction between the imagination and the fancy (see note to "The Thorn" in *Lyrical Ballads*). The imagination is unifying, constructive, seeking the eternal and creating connections between things, while the fancy is willful and dwells on the transitory and the particular. Imagination, in its highest form, equals right reason, the direct perception of the truth, the summum bonum. It is what all the Romantics celebrate as the mind's true creative power, Coleridge's "dim Analogue of Creation" (ltr. to Richard Sharp, 15 Jan 1804), which he borrowed from Fichte, Shelley's "circumference" of the universe. The fancy, "the aggregating power," makes original connections of existing materials, and is limited to lesser truths or degrees of falsity. A product itself more of the "aggregating" than the "creative" mind of Coleridge, it was well known in the Enlightenment. Dr. Johnson contrasts the judgement, which is conversant with fundamental realities, with wit ("quickness of fancy"), which has a shallow, if pleasing, facility for superficial connections between the seemingly dissimilar (*Dictionary*).

By *The Prelude* (1804), imagination has supplanted Nature as "the main essential power" (13.289), the guide of his moral development, that process of which *The Prelude* is a "history," "Of intellectual power from stage to stage /

Advancing hand in hand with love and joy, / And of imagination teaching truth" (11.42-5). It has replaced the moral authority of Nature and taken over the mechanical power of association.

Imagination!--lifting up itself
Before the eye and progress of my song
Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,
In all the might of its endowments, came
Athwart me. (6.525ff)

The imagination here is a noumenal cause, "unfathered," that is, a truly creative force, an uncaused cause, and also a "vapour" as it is a teleological spirit, able to manifest itself or its influence in the phenomenal world or not, as it wills. In this way, human works of imagination, books, once condemned as fanciful, are now seen to impress "Upon [our] memory, faithfully as stars / That occupy their places" (*Excursion*, 6.702-3). The imagination has become the most important transport to the eternal; "in poetry it is the imaginative only, viz., that which . . . turns upon infinity, that powerfully affects me . . . passages where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspirations are raised . . ." (ltr. to Walter Savage Landor, 21 Jan 1824). Crabb Robinson noted in his diary for 11 September, 1816, that Wordsworth "represented . . . much as, unknown to him, the German philosophers have done, that by the imagination the mere fact is exhibited as connected with that infinity without which there is no poetry." From this observation, from the Wordsworth of poems like "Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora" (1804), teleology aside ("Heaven supports / The feeble motions of thy life"), we can see him pointing down the road Keats was to follow: "Feelers of love, put forth as if to explore / This untried world . . ." (69-73).

Keats, however, fretted over no power struggle between the idealist's mind and external teleology, as did Coleridge, Shelley, and even Wordsworth. Yet, within his practical acceptance of the separate autonomy of material and mental, he reaches with the threads of the imagination toward a concept of mind powerfully idealist in an aesthetic sphere:

Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the spider
spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel--the points of
leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and
she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content
with as few points to tip with the fine Web of his Soul, and weave

a tapestry empyrean. (ltr. to Reynolds, 19 Feb 1818)

The imagination on its own, self-motivated and self-justified, was anathema to Byron and distrusted by the (more teleological) others. Keats, however, had no moral agenda to defend, only truth to pursue, and believed that if the imagination achieves the "beautiful," it need look no further for the truth. Imagination in hand, he sweeps aside all other pretenders to truth--analytic reason, knowledge, external impressions--to stand as a simple man of a pure undogmatic faith, naked but for the one power that man needs:

What though I am not wealthy in the dower
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving; yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me, and I glean
Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen
The end and aim of Poesy.
("Sleep and Poetry," Nov-Dec 1816, 284ff)

The imagination produces, creates as a necessary condition for itself, freedom, poetry lives from imagination and lives to praise it. All at once we see poetry stand to imagination as man to God.

A Christian poetic tradition had long claimed poetry as the purest expression of the imagination's holy voice, as revelation. Though Coleridge could easily assign imagination to the company of the conscience as the inner voice of divinity, Wordsworth rises to such heights only when under Coleridge's influence, when he forgets himself. Yet it is only at such times--not when he writes of ordinary people in the language of men, not, that is, when he follows his own native bent--that he inflames his devotees, Shelley and Keats. Byron manages a tertiary reflection of this same sublime (i.e. unfocused) idealism, Wordsworth glinted off Shelley. *Childe Harold* IV (v), tries to make the imagination, its "Beings of the Mind," redemptive, nearly transcendental. But in him both the poet-as-hero and poet-as-prophet seemed indulgent and unfounded and he always backs away muttering. Shelley's claims for the poet know no such skepticism:

Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the

present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. (*Defense of Poetry*, Mar 1821, conclusion)

This differs mostly in the nature of the Final Cause from what Keats had said in "Sleep and Poetry" (quoted just above) about the imagination as an autonomous power. Common to all is Wordsworth's "wise passiveness," that is, the religious ideal of the will as conduit of the divine will. A "hierophant" is an expounder of Eleusinian mysteries, an interpreter of divine truths, a priest. The term "legislator" comes from the Latin "legis" (law) and "lator" (bearer or carrier), or he who bears the law from higher authority (from God or, for Lockeans, universal natural right). Shelley perceives this messenger-work as the greatest freedom, exactly as Keats defines imagination as freedom in the passage from "Sleep and Poetry." For both freedom and imagination express themselves most highly in poetry; poetry is devotion. Dante makes clear in his *Paradise* that perfect happiness and freedom is the complete transparency of the human will to the divine will; metaphorically, the saved shine as lamps blazing with the fire of God. Wordsworth makes this pure receptivity the characteristic of the Neo-Platonic child arriving with "clouds of glory." When he calls it an "infant Philosopher," he means the same as had he said "infant priest" or "saint."

Strictly within literature, the imaginative "act" knows few mortal limits. This presented Byron with a clear running for the will. The hero of a tale could enforce his will, express positive, social, freedom as Byron only wished he could in life. As poet, he could loose his will as he wished. The satires demonstrate this best, as he enlightens Murray, dubious over his lack of plan in *Don Juan*: "Why Man[,] the Soul of such writing is it's licence?--at least liberty of that licence, if one likes" (ltr., 12 Aug 1819). This freedom offered some reassurance when other evidences of the efficacious will had betrayed him. Such as Napoleon:

the provocation [to write verse] was such as to make it physically impossible to pass over this damnable epoch of triumphant tameness. . . . I shall think higher of rhyme and reason, and very humbly of your heroic people, till--Elba becomes a volcano, and sends him out again. (ltr. to Moore, 20 Apr 1814)

Byron might be pulled by the greater visions of Shelley or Dante to speak in terms of the poet-as-hero or prophet--"what is Poesy but to . . . be the new Prometheus of new men, / Bestowing fire from Heaven . . ." (*The Prophecy of Dante*, Jun 1819, 4.11-14)--but he quickly returns to his native skepticism. Still, Byron exercised his own positive freedom of the poet, the poet-as-fate, ever more self-consciously in the later works. If Byron, the man, has to sit "Chill, and chained to cold earth," suffering the malicious or callous whim of Fate, a cursed mortal, Byron the poet, the narrator, can be the Fate of his own creations. He seems conscious of the role in these terms. He finds great freedom in this role, and romps about with it, torturing rhyme, plot, and narrative, with the flippancy and conscious carelessness of the most irresponsible denizen of Olympus. He stretches this freedom in every possible way in *Childe Harold*, *Beppo*, and *Don Juan*. I will return to this at the close of chapter six.

But if assertions by Byron of the divine origin and redemptive power of poetry in *Childe Harold* especially (e.g. IV.v) do not represent his "native notes," they do most other Romantics. For them, poetry, the inner voice of the Universal, is both creativity and memory, both necessary and random, bubbling forth where these antitheses meet, out of space and time. For Blake, the poetic vision arose ex nihilo, while Keats, trailing after Wordsworth and Coleridge, sees it drawing on earlier materials of the mind; Poetry "should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance" (ltr. to Taylor, 27 Feb 1818). This is a very different thing, an opposite thing, from didacticism, different as the imagination is from the fancy.

So, because the corporeal world and the creative power on the palette of the imagination are merged in the mind in a manner that belies their apparent dichotomy, poetic genius, style, or insight cannot be adopted, donned like a robe, but must come to the mind unsought and unwilling. Keats just tended to look inwardly for the source of creative power. He continues the above letter to Taylor: "If Poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all." In the sonnet "To Spenser" (Feb 1818), he denies that he can adopt Spenserian robes without having been nurtured in Spenserian soil:

'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth

To rise like Phoebus with a golden quell
Fire-wing'd and make a morning in his mirth. . . .
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming. . . .

His organicism, if I may call it so, does not, however, like that of Coleridge, proceed by an inner necessity, arising because it must. It instead appears randomly, ignoring such inner laws as maturation or associationism, arising and subsiding regardless of circumstance, by its own purposes:

The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself--That which is creative must create itself. . . .
(ltr to Hessey, 9 Oct 1818)

In fact, Coleridgean organicism directly conflicts with negative capability. To the extent that the growth of poetic power from within, the awakening of the imagination, comes necessarily, arises out of the individual soul (that Keatsian combination of identity and intelligence), then organic poetic vision risks not being an expression of a universal truth through the inner poet but the particular, egotistical self creating its own individual view of reality. It is Coleridgean idealism, and not for Keats. Instead, he valued the ideal quality of Shakespeare and Burns, to be able to claim that he "has no self," that "not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature--how can it, when I have no Nature?" (ltr to Woodhouse, 27 Oct 1818). In short, organicism, encouraging a view of the self as divine or a divine instrument (a hair's breath^d difference), approached from the reverse side the transcendental goal of sublimation of the self into Platonic unity from Keats' negative capability, and he distrusted it. If, in the development of the imagination, he employed organicism, it seems he failed to think out its implications.

Inevitably, of course, poetic vision is imperfectly distributed; there exists in the few an insight denied to the many. A "Man of Achievement," a Shakespeare or (dare he think it) a Keats, exists apart. He describes the transcendent individual in "The Poet" (an early sonnet first published by Lowell in 1924). The poet-as-privileged visionary we have seen as generally Romantic; the image in

Coleridge's "To My Brother George" (Aug 1816), instantly recalls both Keats and Shelley: "the bright warder blows his trumpet clear, / Whose tones reach naught on earth but Poet's ear" (31-32).

For them, the poetic herald is secular, even pointedly pagan. But Keats' imaginative poet could as easily be Blake's idealist Christian visionary. Blake's idealist also achieves a unity with Nature: "To the Eyes of the Man of Imagination Nature is Imagination itself" (qtd. in Caldwell 160). This unity, this synthesis of inner and outer, recalls Hazlitt's extensive discourses on Wordsworth (see especially the essays on *The Excursion*). Keats approaches this external "power more deeply infused" with the open hand of the imagination, consciously, seeking unity. He finds it, the poetry of the earth, in the summer grasshopper and the winter cricket ("On the Grasshopper and Cricket," 1816) as much as he does in the nightingale, and much as Wordsworth does the pure freedom of life and song of the blackbird and lark.

What more felicity can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight with liberty.
(Spenser, "Fate of the Butterfly")

With this quotation, Keats opened his very first edition of Poems (1817), and it bubbles throughout with expressions of freedom:

Fair world, adieu!
Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view:
Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions.
Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air. . . .
(Epistle: "To My Brother George," Aug 1816, 103ff)

Freedom it may be of poetic expression, or freedom of the imagination, an imagination whose power and pre-eminence in the mind of the poetic visionary supersedes, makes irrelevant, all other sorts of freedoms:

Think you he naught but prison walls did see. . . ?
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
In Spenser's halls he stray'd, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air:
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights.
(Sonnet: "Written on the Day That Mr. Leigh Hunt
Left Prison")

In his early poems Keats indulged in poetic freedoms, he cherished the notion of the poet as passive to the voice of the unfettered imagination. These poems delight in digressions (or are plagued by them, if you prefer), such as "I Stood Tip-Toe," lines 94-106. Joseph Caldwell, in *John Keats' Fancy*, advises that the

liberty of the poetic mind to move by its own laws and in defiance of the laws of logic and coherence is the guiding principle of this early poetry. Of these poems it is perfectly idle to require cogency, plan, coherence. . . . (26)

With a slight allowance for overstatement, we are back with Byron and the freedoms of his late satires. For both, the freedom of the poet was paramount, and vigorously expressed. They pursued this freedom from different motives, with Byron arriving as a mature will settling on the only freedom possible, Keats as an ebullient imagination as yet undamped. Keats did mature to see the fully undisciplined imagination as corrosive to the finest poetry, at least to intense, focused thought and image in poetry, and he learned to bring it under the control of a consistent style and within the bounds of a unifying theme or narrative. In fact, amid (perhaps because of) his youthful extravagancies, Keats disciplined himself in often severe imitation of such as Spenser, Milton, and Wordsworth, a self-admitted "camelion poet." Early experiments with the sonnet form and romances produced execrable verse. In "Calidore" (1816), for example, he thrice mounts the autonomous imagination that it might take him on a romance--"Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry"--but just prances about with no notion of how to proceed. The failure of the imagination to lead him to revelation, as Wordsworth's Nature was to lead to virtue, the poet passively submitting to its greater power, is the first darkening of a sky whose night I will discuss in chapter six.

Meanwhile, Keats sails on his raft of the imagination, hoping it will take him out of space and time, suspended now at the borders of eternal states. In a revelatory "loss of time,"

Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme;
With shatter'd boat, oar snapt, and canvas rent
I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent;
Still scooping up the water with my fingers,
In which a trembling diamond never lingers.
("To Charles Cowden Clarke," Sept 1816, 15ff)

Freed, in effect, from the mortal world, his imagination bubbles to the surface:

No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures
Than I began to think of rhymes and measures:
The air that floated by me seem'd to say
"Write! thou wilt never have a better day."
And so I did. (97ff)

These passages both proclaim and demonstrate how his poetic genius lay in the images the imagination lifted out of thought, as in the serene black and white langour of the first six lines above. When he stops to think or explain, he quickly sinks into banality.

Many of his poems--such as "Sonnet on Receiving a Laurel Crown" (1816), Sonnet: "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" (Mar 1817), "Sonnet ("After dark vapors') (Jan 1817), even so late a work as "Lines Written in the Highlands After a Visit to Burns's Country" (Jul 1818)--all testify to the poet as a passive receptor of the dictates of the imagination. In "On Receiving a Laurel Crown," the subject of the sonnet is his inability to compose poetry on order, on request, and once again the poem itself proves the thesis. (See also his letter to Reynolds, 9 Apr 1818, where he feels that the burden of producing a preface for *Endymion* on request has burdened the imaginative act.) "Poetry must be free!" he exclaims, using images of Neo-Platonism, "It is of the air, not of the earth, and the higher it soars, the nearer it gets to its home. . . . It knows no stop in its delight, but goeth where it listeth."⁶⁷ Reynolds, one of the few in complete sympathy with Keats in his early extravagances, writes in his review of *Endymion*:

Poetry is a thing of generalities--a wanderer amid persons and things--not a pauser over one thing, or with one person. The mind of Mr. Keats, like the minds of our older poets, goes round the universe in its speculations and its dreams. It does not set itself a task. (227)

Hunt and Wordsworth (perhaps only in his youth) might have been expected to be sympathetic with this sort of positive freedom; but when presented with Keats' poems, they were not. Wordsworth, despite his theories, was too conscious a craftsman anyway, and certainly too pedantic and settled by this time to tolerate

⁶⁷ Examples suggested by Caldwell (27-28).

such disorder. He criticizes Reynolds' own poetry: "Your fancy is too luxurious, and riots too much upon its own creations" (qtd. in Caldwell 27), and a similar attitude underlay his cryptic response to Keats' reading to him from the "Hymn to Pan" section from book one of *Endymion*: "a Very pretty piece of Paganism."⁶⁸ In the *Edinburgh Review* (204-05), Francis Jeffrey commented on *Endymion* two years after publication of the poem. He praised the evident "enchantments" of Keats' sensuous imagination, but seems to restrain behind clenched teeth his irritation at the indiscipline.

Keats writes to Reynolds (9 Apr 1818): "When I am writing for myself for the mere sake of the moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me. . . ." Keats was never going to be the poet of the efficacious self and freewill. Instead, he comes to see man (ultimately including the poet of liberated imagination) as firmly determined by circumstance; the power of damning circumstance becomes crucial to his highly unique route to revelation, in fact. And even here, in the early years, when imagination still had the power to spurn Necessity and all the social and metaphysical determinants of the life and mind of man, Keats does not grant it self-determination, which is how freewill, if it is to have any meaning, must be defined. Rather, he makes the actions of the imagination, and of the forms of Nature when in harmony with it, random. It is a word he uses several times, and we come to see that he defines freedom as a state where things happen spontaneously, apparently uncaused, at least from the point of view of the poet (chance as limited perception only). External control is not countered in Keats' universe by self-control, by the will acting in concert with its own inner principles, as with Coleridge, but neither does anarchy rule. There is that deep-lying Wordsworthian harmony of things (a pantheist Necessity) that motivates and directs Keats' entire creative process. He barely mentions it, never explains it, seems mostly to take it for granted. All that concerned him in the early years was the observation that when the imagination is allowed to act freely, apparent randomness, spontaneity, accompanies the unshackling of creativity. It is this he means in the "Sonnet (When I have fears that I may cease to be)," Jan 1818, which describes the poetic process as tracing "shadows" of "romance" with "the

⁶⁸Recalled by Haydon, qtd. in Gittings (167).

magic hand of chance. . . ." Chance, by definition, cannot have a hand. A "hand" unmistakably implies the shaping and guiding of a sentient intelligence; it presumes purpose. Magic also implies purposefulness, but one perhaps imperceptible to the acted upon. Chance, therefore, in Keats as in Byron, is only apparent, perceived only from below.

"Spontaneity" returns us to Coleridge. His vast stable of distinctions again prove of use. Defending freewill from the granite Necessity of the material universe on one hand and the moral anarchy of the uncaused will on the other, he distinguishes "between the voluntary and the spontaneous":

In our perceptions we seem to ourselves merely passive to an external power, whether as a mirror reflecting the landscape, or as a blank canvas on which some unknown hand paints it [i.e. mechanical sensationalism or idealism]. . . . These conjectures, however, concerning the mode in which our perceptions originated, could not alter the natural difference of *things* and *thoughts* [i.e. matter/spirit, body/soul]. In the former, the cause appeared wholly external, while in the latter, sometimes our will interfered as the producing or determining cause, and sometimes our nature seemed to act by a mechanism of its own, without any conscious effort of the will, or even against it. Our inward experiences were thus arranged in three separate classes, the passive sense, or what the schoolmen [Lockeans] call the merely receptive quality of the mind; the voluntary [he means the will]; and the spontaneous, which holds the middle ground between both. . . . and in the explanation of the spontaneous movements of our being, the metaphysician took the lead of the anatomist and the natural philosopher. (*BL* 1: 5.66)

In this "spontaneous," Coleridge finds organic freewill, the true source of positive freedom, the following of our own inner principle, self-determination, "our nature" acting "by a mechanism of its own. . . ." Necessitarianism, "that labyrinth-Den of Sophistry," has been chased back to its proper sphere of the material world and room found for the creative imagination.

Coleridge differs from Keats by his essentially self-directed (or divinely directed) organicism, that power which Keats knew must have a purposefulness, but would not assign to a specific power outside itself. The "spontaneous" arises for Coleridge as a synthesis of freewill and Necessity, the human and divine will. In the second critique (of "Practical Reason"), Kant deduced Necessity as the synthesis of possibility and existence. He then opposes it to its antithesis, freewill,

arriving at the synthesis of "Duty," the necessary moral choice. Kant's "Duty," then, equals Coleridge's organic "spontaneity," and they do so in the traditional sense of a higher (or more fundamental) will acting through, harmonizing with, even subsuming in its greater purposes, the human will. Morality equals the principles of life itself.

Kant's third critique (on "Judgement"), repeats the synthesis of freewill and Necessity, this time in aesthetics, to form a definition of beauty. In his own "On the Principles of Genial Criticism concerning the Fine Arts" (1814), Coleridge again follows him. The *Galatea* of Raphael he sees as an achievement of beauty as free organic expression within form (a concept more immediately derived from Schelling), beauty being "the balance, the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE, and of the confining FORM!" (*BL* 2: 235). And we have come round full circle to Keats again, whose "Ode on a Grecian Urn" I will discuss in chapter six. Meanwhile, in the poetic imagination, positive freedom has crossed over into teleology, and that will concern us next.

CHAPTER IV

TELEOLOGICAL NECESSITY

Enlightenment Necessity, be it atomistic or clockwork, had tended toward a vague teleology (hence my capitalization), for Christians the causal representative of a deistic God. Yet as we have seen already, Romantics, Coleridge especially, sought reality at a unity deeper than cause and effect, a *causa sui* rendering the temporal action of mechanical Necessity not untrue, but superficial. Truth, the reality of efficacious power, returned to revelation, outside the accidents of time and space. And consequently, social concern atrophies in the pursuit of inner elevation and salvation (as Rousseau, in *Emile* tells us). The Romantic resurrection of religion was a flight from humanist freedom and a search for the freedom inherent in purpose. All conditions or activities must have meaning; freedom is not freedom if we are free to do nothing of importance. Importance itself, as a judgement of value, exists only where values have meaning, and this is only within a framework of higher purpose, that is, where values have, or at least, tend toward universality and necessity. The assurance of universality and necessity brings us to final cause, to the borders of religion. Without some manner of immanent destiny men will assume a power vacuum, one which they will fill with some power. Each of these poets found their own alternative to mechanical Necessity and each subsequently will dominate a section of this chapter (except for Keats, who had no Necessity to pursue or flee and the most amorphous of teleologies to embrace.)

The great Romantic image for Necessity, one which evolved toward teleology with them, was the metaphor of life as a stream. Wordsworth's poetry from the very earliest takes him repeatedly to waters of lake and stream, Nature at her most emblematic, most accessible, in the union of temporal activity and permanence that is unceasing flow and wave. Water held a similar fascination for Shelley, played a similar allegorical role in poetry and life (with disastrous results). But as much as the stream and lake suggest natural allegories for Wordsworth, Coleridge employed it first in "A Wish" (1792), and seems to have made him aware of it as poetic metaphor. At least, the imagery of waters becomes more overt, more conscious in his works of the Coleridge years.

The metaphor, though, served nearly all poets of the age. Southey's *Thalaba* (1801) especially influenced Shelley. *Thalaba*, escaping from the witch, Miamuna, travels by boat, down a stream, to a river, and to the ocean; the point of which is to illustrate the passage of life to broader and deeper understanding, to final death and revelation.⁶⁹ A boat (even better, a raft like Huckleberry Finn's) cannot go except as the river goes, cannot but show us that our lives flow by a greater Necessity. The traveller in Shelley's *Alastor* repeats the same journey (an overt gesture to Southey), a necessitated journey through life which in a more general way makes company with Don Juan, the Ancient Mariner, Endymion, Childe Harold, and Wordsworth of *The Prelude*.

Goethe, characteristically expansive, sweeps his gaze across the entire cycle:

Ozean, gönn uns dein ewiges Walten. . .
 Wolken sendetest,
 Nicht reiche Bäche spendetest,
 Hin und her nicht Flüsse wendetest,
 Die Ströme nicht vollendetest . . .
 Du bist's, der das frischeste Leben erhält.⁷⁰

He employs not only the Neo-Platonic maternal divine, but the contemporary German fascination with Eastern mystic cycles of regeneration, mixed with legitimate, practical science. Coleridge, in "A Wish," also carries the metaphor to its logical, Neo-Platonic conclusion of reunion of waters into the sea at death, though his attitude remains far more ambivalent than Goethe or Wordsworth. Wordsworth is less a Christian and therefore less shy of the implied determinism. In the "Old Cumberland Beggar" he ^{takes} comfort in the "tide of things" (164) that propelled him, unwilling and unconscious. "Such a stream / Is human life," he affirms in *The Excursion*, expressing the religious "hope / That my particular current soon will reach / The unfathomable gulf, where all is still!" (*Excursion* 3.986-91). When Calvert's bequest freed him from financial worries, Wordsworth was released to follow his natural genius, the stream bed Nature had laid for him.

⁶⁹and he lectures at us from a footnote, in the didactic manner of young Shelley, shaking the point free from obscuring symbolism to prevent us missing it.

⁷⁰"Vouchsafe us, Ocean, your rule forever. . . . rain-clouds sending, / Freshlets richly spending, / Streams now here now yonder bending, / Noble rivers ending . . . Of life's renewal, you are the fountain" (*Faust* 2: II.8437-43).

He "cleared a passage for me, and the stream / Flowed in the bent of Nature" (*Prelude* 13.366-67). The Wye lay at the focus of "Tintern Abbey," the ever moving, never moving symbol and power of permanence in flux. The Derwent takes the poet to its bosom in the very first line of the 1799 *Prelude*: "Was it for this / That one, the fairest of all rivers . . . sent a voice / That flowed along my dreams?" Taking the poet by the hand from the moment of birth, Nature, as the Derwent, soothed his mind into harmony with her own rhythm:

didst thou, beauteous stream,
Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
Which with its steady cadence tempering
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness. . . . (1.1ff)

When he has arrived at the end of *The Prelude*, in a recapitulation, a summation of the development of his own mind, he unifies the poem with a return to the image of the stream:

we have traced the stream
From darkness, and the very place of birth
In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
The sound of waters [the Derwent of 1.1ff] . . .
And . . . from its progress have we drawn
The feeling of life endless, the one thought
By which we live, infinity and God.
(13.172-84)

Of course, this all wraps up in association theory, Coleridge specifically referring to the "streamy nature of the association" (*AP* 55). The metaphor and the psychology merged within a Necessity equally amenable to any manner of impulsion, teleological or mechanical. "I was hurried forward by a stream / And could not stop" (*Prelude* 5.183-84). This impulsion, so needed by morality, so easily ^{equate^d with} divine purpose, necessitates also the woes of maturation, a major Wordsworthian grief:

But ah! too brief in Youth's enchanting reign,
Ere manhood wakes th' unweeting heart to pain,
Silent and soft thy silver waters glide:
So glided Life, a smooth and equal Tide.

Sad Change! for now by choking Cares withstood
It hardly bursts its way, a turbid, boist'rous Flood!⁷¹

But he would rather see it as a leading by the hand of beneficent divinity:

me hath Nature tamed and bade to seek
For other agitations or be calm;
Hath dealt with me as with a turbulent Stream,
Some nursling of the mountains, whom she leads
Through quiet meadows
("Home at Grasmere" 726ff)

Later, he did tend to shy from overt admissions of Necessity, even benign, the direction of life softened to a "mighty stream of tendency."⁷² Faced with the conflict of even divine Necessity with his beloved freedom, Wordsworth slides into the fog of suggestion, the lurking proximity of sublime inevitability. He permits the banks, then, to be as guiding hands, not enclosing walls, and allows the stream seemingly to choose its own route, as we might describe a stream as "meandering." Only its continual advance to the sea remains always necessary in his poetry, suggesting the inevitable aging of mortal man and the advance of his soul to its reunion.

Shelley found the stream metaphor fecund in manifold Necessities. Though it was the stream of life in *Alastor*, his necessitarianism allowed it from the beginning also to be "The mighty tide of thought . . . / Which from the Daemon now like Ocean's stream / Again began to pour" (*The Daemon of the World*, 1816, 2.337-39). This encamps on Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" speculations with boldness. Wordsworth passed through that stage, guided by Coleridge and his own conservatism, while Shelley stopped there, in Keats' "Vale of Soul-Making," to build the temple of the Intellectual Philosophy. With *The Daemon of the World*, he reworked the necessitarianism of *Queen Mab* four years before, mystifying it to a more pantheist Wordsworthian "Spirit that pervades this infinite machine" (note to *QM* 1.252). This culminates in Necessity as the power that flows from the Absolute, embodied as in Demogorgon, whose "mighty law" is Necessity (*PU* II.ii.43) or represented in the stunning vision of the river Arve

⁷¹"Lines: To a Beautiful Spring in a Village," 1794, draft lines for 29-32.

⁷²*Excursion* 9.87, a compromise first appearing in a 1798 draft of "The Pedlar."

pouring from the glacial stillness of "Mont Blanc." Here, Wordsworth's impelling "motion" and "Spirit" reach dizzying heights of imagination, soar with the wings of Plato and Plotinus, while still expressing the pantheism of "Tintern Abbey."⁷³

Teleological Necessity is as well represented as a stream of air--as in the West Wind, or the breeze across Coleridge's aeolian harp, or Keats' sweep of air across a field of grain. Shelley found streams in motion itself, as Coleridge had in "going beyond" Hartley (the "streamy nature" of association) in comprehending thought as "motion," and thus in the *Primum Mobile* itself, the Power that directs and maintains order (e.g. "The Cloud," 1820, 76). But Shelley's Necessity remains blind, purpose-driven perhaps, but a "Destroyer" and "preserver" without comfort or care. Shelley will fall before it in "Ode to the West Wind," or in *Queen Mab*, exactly as before a God, for the same reasons as Coleridge ("Great Parent!"); yet it no more hears ("Oh hear, oh hear"), no more cares to smite or comfort, than the eternal moving ice of Mont Blanc.

In *Childe Harold IV* (1817), Byron plunges for a few stanzas into the great Neo-Platonic sea, as "The image of Eternity" (clxxxiii) ("Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean--roll!"), but does nothing more with it. "Stanzas to the Po" (Jun 1819), bring the flow of a river to a metaphor for the life of a man in a Wordsworthian and necessitarian way: "Borne in our old unchanged career, we move; / Thou tendest wildly onwards to the main, / And I--to loving one I should not love" (5). The ocean appears again in *Don Juan* as "That Watery Outline of Eternity" (XV.ii, spring 1823), a sublime (because indistinct) but not comforting image, in fact in an way hostile to Neo-Platonism, as an expression of an enforced conformity, a "great *Ennui*." In his final poem, "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year" (22 Jan 1824), the stream metaphor carries forward his call for action in the cause of Greece: "Awake, my spirit! think through *whom* / Thy lifeblood tracks its parent lake, / And then strike home!"

⁷³So enamoured was Shelley of this Wordsworth, Coleridge's "philosophic" Wordsworth, that we should little wonder at Shelley's irritation at the Wordsworth of "Peter Bell."

IV.A Nature

The eternal necessity reveals itself as Nature.⁷⁴

It was characteristic of both the Enlightenment and the Romantic Age that the quest of most thinkers on man and society was for a foundation of ultimate moral authority, an unchallengeable basis for morals beyond the corrupting reach of temporal circumstance, the expediency and rationalizations of men. What distinguished the heirs of Copernicus and Newton from their predecessors, and linked them to the Stoics, was the need to establish such a basis beyond the reach of religion as well. But this meant, in the Enlightenment, that morals returned to the soiled world of men. Still needing morality to be re-established as "The laws of things," secure "Beyond the reach of human will or power . . ." (*Prelude* 11.97-98), they substituted for religious authority various nonteleological ethical doctrines (e.g. utilitarianism, self-interest, natural rights) or alternative teleologies, most notably Nature.

Nature I define as the things and powers of the universe external to man and his products, but short of any anthropomorphic God or other spiritual beings.⁷⁵ She had long offered the most acceptable compromise between earthy man and the divine. Poets of the recent pastoral tradition, such as James Thomson and Edward Young, provided Wordsworth with a vibrant Enlightenment pastoral image of Nature as maternal and moral.⁷⁶ Most like Wordsworth of all, William Collins, in "Ode to Evening" (1746), presents Nature treated as almost fully divine, the giver of blessings and deserving of devotion. Of course, the Christian pastoral tradition, such as in *Paradise Lost*, contributes to the perception of Nature as inherently moral and a moralizing influence. Nothing of Wordsworth's vision of Nature, the vision characteristic of his early and middle years, may not

⁷⁴Schelling, *Werke* 5: 290; qtd. in Hirsch 108.

⁷⁵I likewise exclude the amorphous nature defined as universal harmony of Stoic philosophy (e.g. Cicero in *De Officiis*) and its Enlightenment heirs (e.g. Locke in *Two Treatises on Government*).

⁷⁶See the discussion in Schneider 87ff.

be found in eighteenth century pastoral poetry (except Neo-Platonism and the all-transforming crucible of Coleridgean imagination). Of course his native mountains were impressed upon him, but their effect was to steer him in the direction of an even more powerful poetic tradition.

Shelley, though a classicist and Wordsworthian, felt little kinship with Nature, never using her as an autonomous power. Instead, he found her enduring employment as the agent of higher powers, and a potent poetic symbol. Byron, though aⁿ Enlightenment man, had little empathy with Nature at all. In "I Would I Were a Careless Child" (pub 1808), written while a careless teenager, Byron costumes himself in Wordsworthian shrubbery: "the freeborn soul, / Which loves the mountain's craggy side, / And seeks the rocks where billows roll." But this is little of Byron, despite the strained attempts of scholars to make weight out of early summers spent in the valley of the Dee. Equally artificial are the naturalist and pantheist stanzas of *Childe Harold* III. Amid a rush of pastoral indulgences and Wordsworthian stylistics in the happy months from his exile through *Manfred*,

Nature ultimately serves him as a refuge for negative freedom (from society and its expectations and deceits) and a palette of images for attempts at bravura writing. It does not last. As for Keats, the city boy, not even the "grand scenes" he sought in Scotland could inspire in him more than the intimations of illness. No, this section belongs to Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's near-animism was not derived from Coleridge at Goslar, as has been suggested, but offers a shadowy presence in early poems such as "The Vale of Esthwaite" (1787) and "An Evening Walk" (1788-89). "An Evening Walk" in fact contains nascent forms of most of the major themes and images of his later work. The classical and neoclassical poems Wordsworth studied, translated, and imitated as a student contained landscapes often teeming with animist and quasi-divine spirits and other intangible powers. He also tells us, undoubtedly with creative hindsight, in *The Prelude* (1799), of being aware as a child and a young man of the active agents of Nature and infinity, "external things" with which his internal "soul," his indivisible self, "communed" (2.411, 416-417). He offers himself as subject to animist spirits in the boat-stealing episode of the 1799 *Prelude*, "They guided me" (1.81), but the student of a rather different sort of Nature, unified and pantheistic, in the 1805 version, "surely I was led by her"

(1.372, my emphases). Both are popular Enlightenment ideas: animism as classical literary convention and pantheism as a concession of religion to the new science. Animism usually exists more tenuously, more furtively in the poetry, often as simple poetic artifice, often more, but it exists only very early, before beliefs fully form themselves, and it fades before pantheistic Nature.

Unified Nature soon rules the wood in Wordsworth, leaving what genii there are to become only separate voices of the one mind. Nature, if she would act teleologically and warrant devotion, must be unified, be of the eternal and unchanging, behind cause and Necessity.

I had been taught to reverence a power
That is the very quality and shape
And image of right reason, that . . .
 lifts
The being into magnanimity,
Holds up before the mind, intoxicate
With present objects and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate shew
Of objects that endure. . . .
(Prelude 12.24ff)

Wordsworth does pull Nature to him, shrouding it in the dark tones of his north country conservatism. In this alone, she takes on his particular colors. There is an ancient sense underlying much of his most natural poetry, those poems among his best only slightly touched by Coleridgean idealism (or associationism), such as "Michael" (1800), where Nature allies with men in the timeless herding and tilling on the land. When Michael's son leaves, a continuity breaks, a divorce occurs that cannot be repaired. We assume the son repents his rashness, but still he must suffer the estrangement, forever wandering on the sea, that very antithesis of the upland farm. Poems of seeming conventional morality, such as "The World is Too Much With Us" (1802-04), move in the shadow of that lost "belonging."

Briefly, in the 1799 *Prelude*, Wordsworth grants pantheistic Nature the power of unambiguous divinity in the boat-stealing and nest-robbing episodes. In a rare show of might, Nature directly applies the moral lesson:

the huge cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
With measured motion, like a living thing
Strode after me. (111ff)

His selfishness, his will, in a way exactly parallel with Christian sin, separated him from the eternal good. The frowning brow of maternal Moira rises to block out the stars, Wordsworthian symbols of divine eternity. More than just blocking him from the heavens, the towering mass becomes the angry visage of that heaven itself, the active power of Nature to reach out and punish him.

Beyond these examples, he does not dwell on Nature as an active autonomous force, and I sense that his basic common sense is not comfortable with it. Certainly there may be little to distinguish between even these examples and the fertile imaginings of a guilty conscience. More often, Nature is evoked as the more passive source of sensations, a place where we will discover moral lessons if we are only sensitive to them. His growing dependence on the imagination was not as much of a move as it seems, for he did not move toward the imagination from an epistemology where the mind and Nature were each active and creative half of the time, but rather with an understanding of the sensual world where the mind was half creative and half passive to an almost fully passive Nature. Other than the specific cases of Nature's active agency, meaning those cases, as illustrated above, where she manipulates sensual objects for a specific effect on Wordsworth (as a Greek god might do), Nature's "active" agency consisted in being sublime or beautiful so that the poet might perceive her so and recognize the eternal in her. Nature's actual agency in this is no more than as a first, not an efficient cause; the relation is rather as the deist's God to his universe.

ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours. . . . (*Prelude* 2.440ff)

We should recall that the 1799 *Prelude* comes a year after "Tintern Abbey." There we had Wordsworth's most famous statement on pantheistic causation: "a motion and a spirit that impels / All thinking things . . . all objects of all thought . . ." (100-01). Though mechanical Necessity answers to the description if a

"motion" (a term of the "school-men"), the modifying word "spirit" implies otherwise. As the first phrase suggests both mechanical and teleological Necessity applied to man, so the latter gestures toward idealism while committing itself only to associationism (the same process with the power source reversed). Romantic poets, like politicians, skip along fences. He suggests spirituality, detectable only from the barest outline of its causal power. By 1798 he had been two years with Coleridge, well subjected to preachments of pantheism and associationism, yet he still remained noncommittal on Christianity.

Although I have shown examples of nascent idealism in young Coleridge, pantheism proved the greatest early temptation away from Christian orthodoxy. His ceaseless quest for unity, from his early Unitarianism to the all-explaining Christian idealism of *Biographia Literaria*, kept luring him toward the deep wood of pantheism. Not only Coleridge, but the entire Enlightenment and Romantic Christian revival, steeped as Christianity is in Platonism and Neo-Platonism, often seemed bathed in pantheism. In a sense, despite the theological problems, of which Coleridge was all too keenly aware, popular Christianity was highly pantheistic during this and the succeeding age. So it was that Wesley could write hymns such as "Till all my hallowed soul be thine; / Plung'd in the Godhead's deepest sea, / And lost in thine immensity!" God as the maternal bosom is hugely comforting. In Coleridge, similar expressions abound: "God as all in all! / We and our Father one!" ("Religious Musings" 44-45), God "diffused through all" things, and in the tranquil release of "On the Christening of a Friend's Child" (1797).

It was not long, however, before Nature began to resist the religious demands made on her, failing to support transcendental any more than perfectibilist hopes. Looking back from an orthodox future, Coleridge recalls his early pantheism not so much as an error of judgement, or even solely as insufficient reflection, but as an effect of external temptation. This preference to see himself as a victim of external evil, a sufferer "more sinned against than sinning," nearly helpless before a dangerous universe had important consequences for both his religion and his philosophy, with special interest for Necessity. He speaks of himself in a marginal note (dated 27 Aug 1818) to Jakob Boehme's *Aurora* as "intoxicated with the vernal fragrance & effluvia from the flowers and first-fruits of Pantheism, unaware of its bitter root . . ." (qtd. in *Friend*, 1818, 1: 118n). Pantheism failed in part

because it could not provide Coleridge with a personal and anthropomorphic God; but more to the point, its unacceptable "bitter root," was its inevitable Necessity and denial of moral election. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), speaking of his years of greatest attraction to Spinoza (the late 1790's), he recalls realizing that the pantheistic world where the properties of "organization, and motion," as expressions of divine "intelligence and will" exist "*in* God" rather than "from God," leaves us with a limited

idea of GOD. For, without any knowledge or determining resolve of its own, it would only be a blind necessary ground of other things and other spirits; and thus would be distinguished from the FATE of certain ancient philosophers in no respect. . . .

(BL 1: 10.133-34)

The "will" of God remains, but even His choice vanishes. Coleridge felt clearly the commonsense conclusion that Necessity denied human freewill, but even worse, when all things are determined with no human efficacy to introduce variation, to originate acts, then God Himself has nothing for which He requires freewill. God would have necessitated Himself, and if not actually surrendered His own eternal purpose, would have at least renounced temporal purposefulness. Spinoza made just this point; his universe marched to the music of a God who was law, was determinism, lacking sentient design or purpose as humans (and Coleridge) understood it. A necessitated, invariable creature is a blind machine, and if Coleridge could not tolerate such a view of man, he surely could not accept both man and God defined that way. So pantheism, despite its clean and elegant explanation of a disturbingly complex universe, despite its appealing synthesis of religion, philosophy, and mathematics (a quest of speculative men back to Thales), ultimately had to be resisted. After encouraging Wordsworth in his pantheism, he then sought to drag the Recluse the other way.

In Wordsworth, suggestions of Christianity began to meld with the pantheism after 1798. In notes leading to the 1799 *Prelude* appears a lowercase god, discussed in pantheist terms:

the one interior life
That lives in all things . . .
In which all beings live with god, themselves
Are god, Existing in the mighty whole. . . .
(notes for 2.216-19)

In the 1805 version, the final two lines have been deleted. More uncertain is the nature of the divinity in "Hart-Leap Well" (1800), where the same sort of lowercase divinity ("he") interfuses all of Nature, a "Being" not quite identified. The Hart,

not unobserved by Nature fell,
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

'The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.
(163ff)

This describes no Christian God. Nor is it Nature, whom Wordsworth always personifies in maternal, feminine terms and who appears just this way a few lines later: "Nature . . . Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom" (171-72).

Teleologically, though, he had not far to go from youthful to mature faith. He had from the beginning gilded Nature with quasi-religious language in the manner of Young and Collins. He speaks of Nature's "ministry" and of a Christian-like suppression of the will. Often whole passages will take on this tone (his version of the biblical, evangelical, language of Coleridge and Shelley), a combining of phrases which in sum lend an air of the scriptures to a passage. In *The Prelude* when young Wordsworth finds himself visited by Nature, suddenly we learn that he "liveth" and things "seemeth" (2.412ff). Speaking of that moment of conversion when he knew he was to be a poet (a "Damascus" experience in Wordsworth's plodding way something like Shelley's), it came to him with Nature in an "empyrean light" (4.335ff). He mentions the "laborers going forth into the fields" and uses the phrases "My heart was full," "vows / Were then made for me," "bond . . . Was given," "sinning greatly," "dedicated spirit," and "walked / In blessedness." In "The Old Cumberland Beggar" (1798), benevolence, the ultimate earthly morality is similarly sanctified (133-61). He talks of "the Decalogue" and "moral law" and uses the phrases "land where they abide," "with whom they dwell," "Praise be," "of the poor man ask," "Go, demand of him, if there be," and "builds . . . hope in heaven."

Still, Nature's ministry became God's ministry fairly slowly. In "There was a Boy" (1798) the dialogue between boy and Nature clearly excludes God. This was the year of his greatest faith in Nature, she who he turned to following the "crisis of moral questions" of 1796. But already, as we have seen, the imagination (idealism) and associationism were on the ascendant at this time, as were recognition of Nature's inability to prove herself universal and necessary (the prime requirements of any religion). By "Resolution and Independence" (1802), a study of Wordsworth's notion of limited freewill, the lessons of Nature more or less originate with God. The Leech-gatherer appeared when the narrator was standing "Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven" (54), suddenly there as if spirited by divine conjuring (certainly by divine moral intent: "by apt admonishment," 112). He is described as being "like a man from some far region sent" (111), a manipulation more the style of God than pantheistic Nature. God rises clear above the trees by 1804-05 in poems such as "Ode to Duty" (1804), *The Prelude*, and the later stanzas of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Wordsworth finally succumbs to the earnest missionary seated before him, the correspondent to whom that epic confessional is solely addressed, offering perhaps no small balm of success to that self-tortured soul, who had long waited to hear from Wordsworth (what seem in fact all but Coleridge's own words) recognition of "the one / Surpassing life, which--out of space and time . . . is, / And hath the name of, God" (*Prelude* 6.154-57). It has all the style and syntax of an overt profession of faith, a conscious proscription of other divinities.

God now stands to Nature as both first and efficient cause to phenomenal agent, as Shelley's Absolute (Being) to his Necessity (Life). "The life of Nature, by the God of love / Inspired . . ." (11.99-100). He now looms behind the still apparently powerful, efficacious Nature, a subtle transfer of power which invalidates none of what Wordsworth had said already about her ministries (as a politician deftly effects a change without appearing to have contradicted himself). And there God was to remain, though usually filtered through Nature's own softer, more ancient marriage with mankind.

IV.B Providence

to resolve the efficient into the final [cause]
may be the ultimate aim of philosophy. . . .⁷⁷

The Oxford English Dictionary records the first use of the word 'Providence' as a synonym for 'God' dating only from 1602. Passmore notes the importance of the new dual meaning of the word:

Before that time, it was no doubt possible to speak of 'God's providence', as meaning by that his providential care, but not to use 'Providence' as a kind of personal noun. Written into this novel use is the conception of a God whose whole concern it is to care for the felicity of mankind. . . . [whose] objective is not, primarily, to redeem men, to forgive them, or to mete out justice to them but to secure their final felicity, their ultimate perfection. He is, in short, a most un-Augustinian God. (210n)

And we ought not be surprised that it took until the humanist Renaissance for such a concept of God to arise. Nor that this is how the Enlightenment liked to think of God, when they thought of Him at all, for the term 'Providence' carried an agreeably detached, uncommitted, and decidedly un-Enthusiastic sense with it. The sadder, less certain Romantics lost much of this optimistic belief in divine stewardship even as they gained faith in a more forthright God. The movement from a philosophical back to a parental God pivots on Coleridge. The countermovement, the resurgence among intellectuals of skepticism swept my three late Romantics away from Christian belief and we will find nothing but scorn or neglect of Christian Providence from them.

It is no coincidence that an age that turned the attention of boys to philosophy and social theorizing should produce a harvest of men of genius. Coleridge's claim to have immersed himself in metaphysics before his fifteenth year need not be doubted. Such intellectual precociousness was not unusual at the time, especially within the middle class dissenting community. Pursuing "favorite subjects," he

⁷⁷Coleridge, *Friend* (1818) 3.2, "Essays on the Principles of Method," no. 10; *Works* 4: 1.498.

tells us, in a self-mocking quotation from Milton's *Hell*, he entered pathways "Of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate, / Fix'd fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute, / And found no end in wandering mazes lost" (*BL* 1: 1.10).

Precisely what he read remains problematical, although he told Gillman much later that it included "essays on Liberty and Necessity" in Thomas Trenchard's *Cato's Letters* (1724), a work that expounded familiar egalitarian social opinions, Lockean psychology, and necessitarianism (Orsini 17). Certainly he read Priestley, Hartley, and Milton, for their influence appears from the very beginning, and combined with healthy doses of stiff Protestantism, there is no reason to assume that his speculative reading, if more intense than most, in any way diverged from the popular writers and works of the day. Despite claims of being, as an adolescent, "an infidel" in religion, we have no reason to see this, even if true, as anything more than a passing fancy. Of more importance is the influence, if only latent at times in his youth, of his clerical father, whom he describes as "a first-rate Christian," if not a first-rate intellect (Chambers 1: 4).

Three sorts of Necessity emerge informally from his early works:

1. Philosophic Necessity of the familiar Hartley, Priestley, Godwin sort, the mechanical succession of cause and effect. He does not make Hartley's distinction between philosophic and practical Necessity.

2. Providence (the active intervention of God). Using the vaguely Calvinist tradition of his upbringing as a stick with which to beat the deists, he occasionally, especially in later years, spoke of the active agency of an anthropomorphic God in the daily, or worldly, affairs of men. This includes the voice of God in our conscience, His hardening or softening of men's hearts, as well as such actions as openly smiting the wicked or directly speaking through revelation.

3. Providence (God as Fate, or Moira). Here he employs a more general understanding of events, those beyond the powers of men, things only explicable to Coleridge as the expression of the divine will, but which suggest a necessity of events occurring because of the divine ordering of men and their world rather than direct intervention, of the eternal plan at work rather than temporal solutions. This third sort resembles the deist position, also a synthesis of the other

two. Coleridge could not long permit the destinies of men to be left to an "atheist" materialist Necessity, yet freewill equally could not interfere with the progression of the divine intent in the world, nor with the moral need that evil be the necessary consequence of evil. Thus, between the mechanical, necessitated universe of corporeal objects and the perfect freedom in total obedience that is the spiritual, lies this uneasy coexistence of divine intent and human will, the latter seeming at times to frustrate the former, but where the former ensures the ultimate triumph of its purposes.

Providential Necessity does not determine events; instead, natural laws arise as the "Word" of God, necessarily out of His being, being expressed as the divine "act" (much as in Shelley's Neo-Platonism):

A law = the principle of the Necessity of that, which appertains to the existence of a thing . . . The principle by which it *exists* determines its *actions*: or it acts according to the principle which necessitates its mode of existence. . . . (Victoria College Lib. MS F.2.ii; qtd. in Levere 100)

A social law against murder, for example, does not exist to prevent people from murdering, though it may have this effect, but exists only as a result of that innate morality that makes men wish not to murder each other. So too the "laws" of the Newtonian universe and the Word of God. And we are free when we obey the law against murder because it is an expression of our own motivating principles, as we are free when we adhere to the commandments of God's will expressed in our hearts and right reason.⁷⁸

Coleridge thus makes Necessity in the mind (the foundation of associationism) a nonquestion. He supersedes even consideration of cause and effect as related to mind with the doctrine of "contemporaneity," of linked mental phenomena being not related sequentially, as causes of each other, but as the "conditions" of each other's existence. Hume was right so far as he saw causality as a product of mental conjunction, but rather than degrading knowledge, he inadvertently freed the

⁷⁸It is a freedom, I will observe, shared with cabbages and galaxies. Note the borderline silliness of Wordsworth in "A Poet, He hath put his heart to school," (1842), where a flower "is free / Down to its root, and in that freedom, bold."

mind to look for relations of things outside of time, of sequence. Contemporaneity "is the *limit and condition* of the laws of mind," because it exists as a precondition, prior to thought, as "gravitation is to loco-motion" (*BL* 1: 7.85). If Necessity is released from simple sequence in time, it easily becomes the tool of God as an expression of His will, both universal and timeless, at once simultaneous and everywhere necessary. In that way may the will of God include physical laws, but not be limited to them. The universe moves as "one," and "all the deviations too were *seen* in one intuition of one, the self-same, necessity--& this necessity was a Law of Spirit . . ." (*Notebooks* 2: 2151, Jul-Aug 1804). In a final irony, Coleridge steals Necessity away from the materialists altogether in the observation that, with their certainty shown to be an illusion, they can hold "nothing but high degrees of Probability possible" (*Notebooks* 1: 389). So the materialist cannot employ Necessity, while the theist can. Coleridge can now rest more comfortably on the assurance that only knowledge that comes through direct revelation can promise certainty, can deliver Necessity.

He could manage, however, only assertions, not proofs, for divine causation. We believe, he reminds us, in circumstantial causation, such as

in the undoubted influence of example, of education, in short of all the administrants and auxiliaries of the Will. The will may be acted on not only by ourselves (through the cultivation of habits), but by the will of others, nay even by nature, by the breeze, the sunshine, by the tender life and freshness of the sensation of convalescence, by shocks of sickness. . . . Why not then an influence from the Sun of God, with the spirit of God acting directly on the *homo noumenon*, as well as through the *homo phaenomenon*? This would make a just distinction between grace and redemption and providential aids: the direct action on the noumenon would be grace--the call--the influence on the *noumenon* through the *homo phaenomenon* by the prearrangement of outward or bodily circumstances would be, as they are commonly called in pious language, providences.⁷⁹

He no more explains causation than the materialists, only defined the arena in which he imagines it happens. Yet he feels no compulsion to prove how divine causation works; Kant has proven the existence of God, and the fact of divine

⁷⁹marginal note to Kant's *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* 297; qtd. in Muirhead 249-50.

causation follows by logical necessity. The rest, the how, is just pleasing speculation. He knew the truth and thus lacked motivation for more than the desultory parade of assertions which characterizes much of his philosophy. When the conclusions predate the reasonings and when the route to truth is asserted to be other than experience or reason, then the spur to rigorous thinking, to tight, coherent, defensible argument has been lost.

In the Bible every agent appears and acts as a self-subsisting individual: each has a life of its own, and yet all are one life. The elements of necessity and free-will are reconciled in the higher power of an omnipresent Providence, that predestinates the whole in the moral freedom of the integral parts. (*SM; Works* 6: 31)

We can hardly underestimate his need for Providence, that morality, justice, might have meaning and life coherence. He has rehearsed and distilled his complaint against materialism into: "the utter rejection of moral responsibility, of a present providence, and of both present and future retribution" (*BL* 2: 23.186). The issue could not have been more tersely stated. Two of the complaints are of the seeming denial of a currently active, intervening God ("present providence" and "present . . . retribution"). The other two complaints have to do with power and incentives for moral election ("moral responsibility," by which he means culpability as a product of freewill, and "future retribution"), that is, morality demands that men have choice and power that they might be held culpable. Here Coleridge reveals the assurances that Providence must provide: a personal, intervening God to bring present justice, guaranteed Necessity in causation that virtue and vice be assured their fruits (a shaky pillar indeed--see "Necessitated Pathways" below), human freewill to ensure culpability, and the promise of immortality as final justice.

So, although Kant rested on God proven by logical Necessity alone, Coleridge had no choice, emotionally, but reconstruct God as a knowable entity. He misused Kant for this very purpose; the whole point of confirming synthetic *a priori* knowledge for Coleridge was to prove the truth of revelation. Rather, more accurately, as revelation needed no proof, it was philosophy he sought to prove; the very act of "proving" was before the bar, not revelation. Mere Kantian logical Necessity denies that any of the writers of the scriptures could have known

what they wrote; it refutes the certainty of all who claim to have heard the voice of God. Revelation thins to a gossamer of possible imaginings. Coleridge, as we have seen, was, and defended himself for being, "*beforehand* impressed with a belief of a providence guiding this great drama of the world to its conclusion" (*Philosophic Lectures*; qtd. in Calleo 87). He would allow Kant to destroy analytic reason and the certainty of sensual knowledge, borrow his dialectic method, and then rush past him to establish a new perceptual order.

IV.C Innate Qualities

Hume rejected Locke's "tabula rasa," recognizing in Cicero and other ancient writers a portrait of man instantly identifiable as the man he saw about him in all important particulars. Across cultures, an innate human nature did exist, and though perfectibilist hopes for man would have it otherwise, wishful thinking ought not to be accepted as a substitute for clear thinking. Byron agreed, his Enlightenment skepticism much in sympathy with Hume (Byron called him "irrefutable"), and they also shared the observation that a man is motivated by feelings only, that isolated reason has no power. Men, Hume said, "cannot change their natures. All they can do is change their situation . . ." (*Treatise*, 1740, 3.2.7.537). Here again we have the Enlightenment stress on perfecting *society* first, opposing the religious Romantic inclination in favor of perfecting the individual first. One who accepts significant innate qualities could not sympathize with perfectibilist philosophies. This places Byron in the tradition of the "Counter-Enlightenment," those of the eighteenth century who took as their point of departure their disagreement with Locke.

Of Byron as a boy (age 7-9), Marchand says: "The problem of evil as something inborn was readily fostered by the Calvinistic teaching of his nurse and his Presbyterian tutors, and was fortified as he learned more of his own ancestors" (1: 39). He was hardly uniquely cursed in this, as the popular "gothic" fiction of the day suggests. "The fascinating idea that he was predestined to evil was strengthened . . . by his reading a semigothic novel by John Moore called *Zeluco* after its misanthropic hero-villain, fated to perform dark deeds by forces beyond his control," but Marchand could have named a dozen others of similar stripe and popularity. Of course, we need not look only to pulp fiction; Milton had lent his inestimable literary authority (to the Romantics, if less so to Byron--"who reads Milton anyway?") to what Herbert Grierson calls the Puritan "indictment of human weakness" (94). Adam is driven by dangerous curiosity to extensive questioning of the Archangel Michael, and Eve clearly suffers Byron's own favorite curse, the innately insatiable imagination.

Coleridge had been taught "counter-Enlightenment" moral sense philosophies merged with the predestinations of Providence since childhood, and the roots of his organicism and favorite metaphors of growth lie here. In "The Progress of Vice" (1790), he claims with an air that admitted no doubt that man "inborn Truth and Virtue guide," this at an age prior to owning any firm philosophic justification in terms of a Platonic "soul," transcendental "duty," or even doctrine of the conscience. He stood then, as later, on his *a priori* Christian faith. As a good Romantic, his touchstone was always himself: "that divine and nightly-whispering Voice, / Which from my childhood to maturer years / Spake to me of predestined wreaths . . ." ("To the Rev. George Coleridge," May 1797, 36ff). This is a different thing, this divine guarantee, from the simple gifts of the tools, the potential, as in "Lines on a Friend: Who Died of a Frenzy Fever . . ." (1794):

To me hath Heaven with bounteous hand assign'd
Energic Reason and a shaping mind,
The daring ken of Truth, the Patriot's part,
And Pity's sign, that breathes the gentle heart--
Sloth-jaundic'd all! (39ff)

He continually attributes, though not always happily, his virtues and faults to Providence. Poole supposed that his notorious eccentricities and personal pangs were a providential balance for his superior gifts (see Chambers 29), and Coleridge's letter to Poole of 9 October 1797 tells of a childhood built upon the innate qualities of fretfulness, physical ineptitude, sloth, intellectual precociousness, sensitivity, and a preternatural imagination. From these arose, in the presence of shaping circumstances, the consequences of social isolation, academic success, and vanity. A belief in providential powers almost necessarily concludes in a belief in predestination, as it did in Coleridge and Byron.

Aquinas' humanist Christian conviction that all men necessarily choose a perceived good was decidedly not Calvinist, but it appealed to Byron and he seems generally to have accepted it. "Man is born *passionate* of body--but with an innate though secret tendency to the love of Good in his Main-spring of Mind," he observes in "Detached Thoughts" (1821-22, no. 96). He agreed with Aquinas also that man often does great harm in the pursuit of evil misperceived as good. The difference between them on this issue, and it is vast, with Coleridge standing between their extremes, was the extent of man's failure to achieve the

In *Werner*, complete strangers could spot in Werner, though he was in peasant's clothing, an indisguisable bearing of nobility. For Byron, this would be an innate aristocratic quality (of character and merit more than class--e.g. Napoleon, Scott, and Washington). I am immediately reminded of the shepherd-raised pair, Paris and Oedipus. The natural rise of the nobly born to his rightful place solely on the strength of his innate superiority was a commonplace in classical myth. Shakespeare uses it in *The Winter's Tale* and elsewhere and it has been assumed more generally than the egalitarian alternative in European lore.

At Mesolonghi, the pious Dr. James Kennedy bored Byron with discussions on original sin and the innate wickedness of man (surely a case of preaching to the choir). Byron long before had charted his own course away from perfectibility, too long to heed Christianity's own tangential course out of the same harbor. Religion, as Coleridge proved, dismissed egalitarianism as surely, if not as overtly, as Byron. As Dante puts it: "Ond' elli avvien ch'un medesimo legno, / secondo specie, meglio e peggio frutta; / e voi nascete con diverso ingegno."⁸¹ Which returns us to Aristotle and his stratification of society and justification of slavery, born of a notion of harmony and bequeathed to him by Plato. This all suited the early church once it was part of the Rome establishment quite nicely.

Religion's classification of men by innate qualities taints Coleridge from the beginning: "All are not born to soar--and ah! how few / In tracks where Wisdom leads their paths pursue!" ("On Imitation," 1791). He simultaneously assumes election, predetermination, and freewill (that more, if not all, could choose to follow wisdom). As I have been saying, philosophic justification, which most Christians wisely shun, came stumbling after conclusions, mindful that it must tidy up the incongruities. Likewise, "Happiness" (1791) quite baldly announces that people must come to grief when they aspire above their station, to "wealth to

⁸¹"So trees of the same species may bring forth / fruit that is better or worse; so men are born / different in native talent and native worth" (*Paradiso* 13.70-72). Of course differences in fruit also prove the opposite, Locke's power of circumstances--improve the soil, improve the fruit.

which we were not born / Dooms us to sorrow or to scorn" (34-35), such comforts being the rightful preserve only to those gifted by heaven--"But say Life's joy's unmixed were given / To thee some favourite of Heaven"--those enjoying divine preference.⁸² I will concede that this poem both intends to warn of putting faith in the material world, and that it represents another case of Coleridge being sycophantic to his conservative brother, George. Still, it seems impossible for an eighteen year old, in the heady pre-Terror days of the Revolution, who truly believed in its principles, to have written such stuff. I conclude that his liberalism, if honest at all, was very shallow.

Byron, no egalitarian, nonetheless demonstrated that misanthropy need not be elitist, that there were innate corruptions enough for all: "Of the wickedness and depravity of human nature, I have no doubt . . . I have seen too much of it in all classes of society . . ." (Kennedy; Lovell 437).⁸³ At the same time, however, Byron did happily assume a moral sense, an innate tendency to goodness, only he never let it interfere with the will, nor temper his vitriol.

Selim, in *The Bride of Abydos* (Nov 1813), allows man to be innately warlike: "we follow but the bent assigned / By fatal Nature to man's warring kind" (911-12). This might well be seen as special pleading on Selim's part, though if characterization were the issue, it might expected that others in the various dramas and picaresques, more peaceably inclined, might disagree with this and similarly pessimistic views of mankind. But no one ever does. Yet it still only applies to those among men inclined to aggression ("man's warring kind"). Through Fritz, in *Werner*, Byron makes a direct attack on the Lockean, though he limits it to innate bellicosity: "I've heard that nothing can reclaim your Indian, / Or tame the tiger, though their infancy / Were fed on milk and honey" (II.i.136ff). But the reference expands as he turns it into an allegory for the military chiefs of the recent Thirty-Years War. Stralenheim reinforces the point a few lines later, claiming that though peace may currently prevail, "'twill not last,

⁸²There's that concept of being "favored," which proved, I believe, so corrosive to Wordsworth and which I do not see in him prior to the Coleridge years.

⁸³See also ltr. to Harness, 15 Dec 1811.

men's spirits are too stirring. . . . War will reclaim his own" (168-72). Of equal importance, Fritz connects aggression with man's animal, bestial side, and though this is familiar Renaissance duality, it is surely a departure from earlier Romanticism to suggest that a linkage to Nature might represent a degradation of man.

In *Don Juan*, war is described as "Human Nature's agonizing voice" (VIII.lix), and Byron seems at last to make a stand on innate aggression--"Human Nature" implies universality and innateness. Yet even here, Byron backs away from completely affirming this; a bit later, in speaking of the murderous fury of the soldiers: "And whom for this at last must we condemn? / Their natures? or their sovereigns, who employ / All arts to teach their subjects to destroy?" (VIII.xcii). Clearly, however, Byron focuses his satire always relentlessly on the dual targets of society and misused power; there is no point, in a satire meant to be constructive, in attacking something in universal human nature, something innate and therefore unchangeable. (And the didactic intent of this presentation of the unacceptable face of war becomes clear in the atypical optimistic harangue which closes the canto). So although Byron tends to slide around actual confirmation of innate violence in all men, he has clearly established in the first two quotations above an innate aggression impervious to reform in some men, and I take the fine phrase "Human Nature's agonizing voice" generally to complete the picture.

Regarding the "natural" in man, Byron certainly appreciated the natural passions as honest expressions of the heart (in contrast to the affectations of society) and as sublime in their own right. In the Journal entry of 24 November 1813, speaking of the boxer Thomas Cribb, he notes: "I like energy--even animal energy--of all kinds. . . ." The comment recalls Keats' slightly apologetic admiration for the unfettered animal purpose of a street fight, for something noble in the energies displayed (ltr. to George and Georgiana, 19 Mar 1819): a man with a mission or goal in mind rushes along like a stoat, "the creature hath a purpose, and its eyes are bright with it." In this, Byron betrays again the ambivalence between the urgings of the will and the restraints of morality, a suggestion of the terrors that Rousseau's unfettered heart could generate. When the Stranger (the Devil) in *The Deformed Transformed* lauds once-sublime, Homeric man,

When the lion was young,
In the pride of his might,
Then 'twas sport for the strong
To embrace him in fight.
(III.i.50ff)

we need not take it as an unqualified endorsement.

IV.D Fate and the Divinely Necessitated Will

At Mesolonghi, Dr. Kennedy reports Byron telling him:

it appears to me, just from my own recollections and experiences, that I am influenced in a way which is incomprehensible, and am led to do things which I never intended. . . . But I have never entered into the depths of the subject, but contented myself with believing that there was a predestination of events, and that that predestination depends on the will of God. (Lovell, *His Very Self*, 446-47)

What exactly he believed--in Fate, Nemesis, God, Manichaeism--remains problematic. All of these are divine determining powers, and through the guilt mongering and excuse making, the conviction of such a power, however defined, he consistently reaffirms. The level of this belief, his own occasional embarrassment over such paganism in a scientific age, matters less; seamless belief is limited to saints and messiahs. Byron's basic belief, his fatalism, gives as tangible a feel as most men's.

vain was the hope to avert our decline,
And the fate of my fathers had faded into mine.
("Newstead Abbey," Aug 1811)

Evocations of an ill-defined Fate or Destiny dominate the early poems (1803-09). In "The Prayer of Nature" (Dec 1806) he does imply an organic immanent destiny, something intimating a distant deistic God. At this stage, he was too awash in conventional, even slightly archaic, Enlightenment sentimentalities of despairing Love, Fate, and inevitable loss, to wring certainties from such sop. Fate in the robes of Atropos appears as "the dread decree of fate" ("On the Death of a Young Lady," 1802), as "That Destiny's relentless knife" ("Stanzas to Jessy," pub. 1807), and in "Till Fate can ordain that his bosom shall bleed" and "the Fates have decreed" ("To Anne (Oh say not, sweet Anne . . .)," 1807). In "On Finding a Fan" (1807), the Fates first openly acquire an indifference to man--"so wayward fates ordain"--though this had been generally implied up to now. By "Hints from Horace" (Feb-Mar 1811), the concept of Fate had broadened to include pressures on the will both inner and outer, including those of society. "Fate" (91) is here equated with "Custom" (103).

It seems undeniable that

la fatalité a toujours été la seule chose nécessaire, que c'est toujours en fonction d'elle qu'il a vécu et qu'il s'est exprimé, que tout ensemble il s'est cru et s'est voulu et aussi a prodigieusement été l'être fatal."⁸⁴

"[T]here is a fate in . . . small as well as great concerns . . ." Byron writes to Lady Melbourne (28 Sept 1813). His poetic muse seems fired by the idea; just as the hobbles of marriage released him for opposition, so did he require the confirmation of Fate to define his struggle for freedom. He appeals often in the letters to Fate or Providence, most often in letters to Moore (e.g. 5 Dec 1813, 27 Mar, 7 & 15 Oct 1815, 9 & 25 Dec 1820) and Lady Melbourne (e.g. 30 Jul and 28 Sept 1813), they being his closest confidants. He uses the term "Providence" more than any other, even to friends accepting of his wayward pseudodeism. No less to them was he anxious to deny atheism, even to claim Christianity, and this anxiety rings true, although I have shown already that he was not and could not be a Christian. He used "Providence" as a virtual synonym for "Fate," the former being the more socially, and perhaps personally, acceptable term. "Fortune," as defined in chapter one, stood for that Fate which brought a boon (opposed to "mis"fortune):

Like Sylla--I have always believed that all things depend upon Fortune & nothing upon ourselves.--I am not aware of any one thought or action worthy of being called good to myself or others--which is not to be attributed to the Good Goddess--*Fortune!* ("Detached Thoughts," no. 83)

As I have suggested, he was not unaware of the anachronism of Fate in a modern, scientific age, and at times seemed self-conscious about it: "My *daughter*--my *wife*--my *half sister*--my *mother*--my sister's *mother*--my natural daughter--and *myself* all or were all *only* children," and he coyly concludes, "looks like fatality almost" ("Detached Thoughts," 1821-22, no. 119). But he needed it too much to doubt it privately, in the lonely child of his heart. In Mesolonghi, as he lay dying, melancholy and feverish, Dr. Millingen recalled:

⁸⁴"fatality was for him the one necessary condition, that his whole life was wrought upon by this idea, that he declared himself, believed himself, wished himself to be, and in fact prodigiously *was*, the fatal being . . ." (du Bos 20).

he said that during the whole day he had reflected a great deal on a prediction, which had been made to him, when a boy, by a famed fortune-teller in Scotland. . . . "Beware your thirty-seventh year. . . ." "To say the truth, [Byron told Dr. Millingen] . . . I find it equally difficult to know what to believe in this world, and what not to believe. There are as many plausible reasons for inducing me to die a bigot, as there have been to make me hitherto live a freethinker." (Lovell 581)

For Byron the poet, acting as titular Fate over his own created worlds, the operations of Fate are less ambiguous. Every major protagonist is in some way a puppet of, or cursed by, Fate. Werner (as Siegendorf) laments "My destiny has so involved about me / Her spider web, that I can only flutter / Like a poor fly, but break it not" (IV.i.307ff). While comedy requires real uncertainty, some free choices (making Byron's satires not comedic), tragedy has always depended upon the certainty of inexorable Fate. Byron took classical tragedy as his model, a genre especially insistent on the moral effect of affirming absolute rule by Fate. We wait to see how, not if, justice (or, in a cruel universe, malign power) comes, or as in *Oedipus*, upon whom. In any case, it must come.

Byron and his audience differ from the Greek audience in the modern expectation of power and freedom. An Athenian crowd hardly doubted the fatal power of the gods, needing, in fact, as all peoples need, the assurance that someone, even if hostile or flawed, is in charge. The Romantic audience, however, not less religious but having parcelled their religious needs variously to a benign but distant God, possibly a malign but conquerable Satan, and a universal and necessary Newtonian, scientific universe, preferred to be teased with supernatural powers, real belief in such as Fate and Nemesis being scant. So Byron had to assert fatalism overtly to an audience who expected an affirmation of the justice of Providence rather than Fate, Sheridan rather than Shakespeare (who had to be moralized, as we know). In each play or major poem, Byron pauses to explain the fatal causation behind the action. The speech of the Doge in *The Two Foscari* (summer 1821) is typical:

Our Fame is in men's breath, our lives upon
Less than their breath; our durance upon days,
Our days on seasons; our whole being on
Something which is not *us*!--So, we are slaves,
The greatest as the meanest--nothing rests
Upon our will; the will itself no less
Depends upon a straw than on a storm;
And when we think we lead, we are most led. . . .
(II.i.354ff)

We find confirmations of supernatural power throughout Byron, though more often unjust and tyrannical, or indifferent. As I have indicated, the mere certainty of ultimate power will suffice for the most basic of human needs, as a child will prefer even a tyrannical, or abusive father to none at all. Beyond his own creations, examples range from works he chooses to translate, such as "A Very Mournful Ballad on the Siege and Conquest of Alhama" (pub. 1818), to events in daily life, as in Moore's debt troubles as Registrar to the Admiralty in Bermuda: "It seems his Claimants are *American* merchants.--*There goes Nemesis*.--Moore abused America.--it is always thus in the long run.--Time the Avenger" (ltr. to Murray, 12 Aug 1819). The point is, as I say, more the confirmation of power than of justice; so Byron concludes: "It is an odd World--but the Watch has its mainspring after all." So it was that Byron's first irritation over Napoleon's abdication in 1813 was not only for the hero's ignominy, but for the failure of Nemesis properly to quell him with the thunderstroke of justice. By allowing Napoleon to "have been pared away to gradual insignificance" (Journal, 24 Nov 1813), Nemesis disappointed its votaries. There was, Byron would soon discover, a scene yet to be played, one which both confirmed Napoleon in his heroic will and Nemesis in its theatricality. Byron could hardly have scripted the hundred days better himself.

Nemesis (vengeance) Byron does not clearly distinguish from Moira (the restorer of harmony), but as all injustice is an offense against harmony, perhaps the distinction may be moot. He worships Nemesis as the proximate, efficacious power in his pantheon, as Necessity (Demogorgon, the West Wind, the Arve, etc.) is in Shelley's (though Byron equivocates on what powers rule above Nemesis). The great crime in drama, what made Napoleon so easily understood in dramatic terms, was hubris. On this ground battled Jacob and the Angel, Satan and God,

the Byronic Hero and Byronic Fate. In *Sardanapalus*, when Beleses, a soothsayer (e.g. poet in Romantic terms), rightly warns Arbaces, the conspirator, of his fatal star in the heavens, "thy natal ruler" (II.i.66), the practical man scoffs: "My star is in this scabbard: when it shines, / It shall out-dazzle comets." He sarcastically dismisses the power of the gods: "I observe that they are ever just, / And own the bravest for the most devout" (73ff), sounding much like Marino Faliero (see II.i.67ff). Skepticism over their efficacy, however, is not designed to please the ruling powers and we may be sure, though Arbaces be a villain and Marino Faliero a hero, that the hubris of each seals their doom.

Nemesis works internally as much as by external causation, as all powers enforcing justice must account for guilt and conscience (see the discussion above on Coleridge's Providence). Guilt interests Byron more early than later, especially in the picaresques (insofar as we can spot flashes of the substantive Byron behind the mask of fashion in these tales). The Giaour wishes for the true release that grief brings, but "Despair is stronger than my will" (1266) and it denies him surcease. "I want no Paradise, but rest" (1270), he moans, another exiled Romantic wanderer. Manfred may rout the assembled demons come for his soul, but he knows that when death is eternal punishment, then Atropos works for Nemesis as well. But it matters little to Manfred where he suffers, for the gadfly of Nemesis is in his mind. He was "my own destroyer, and will be / My own hereafter" (III.iv.139-40).

In the "metaphysical dramas" (*Manfred*, *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, *The Deformed Transformed*), the internal anguish begins to evolve away from guilt to a pure form of the human anguish, the curse of the imagination (borne by poet-heroes for the sake of mankind). This will be discussed in chapter six. As a consequence, that is, there being less "crime," even clearly culpable hubris to punish, Fate ascends from earth-treading Nemesis to its higher throne of jealous divinity. This shift is recorded in the actions of the people, in their greater futility or resignation. *Cain* opens with a fulsome display of supplication, of people burnishing their own chains; Zillah, especially, prays in a manner Cain observes as "more fear than worship." To counter this higher station for Fate, Byron has given Fate's ministers more human faces, making the contest of will with the protagonist more inherently dramatic, less of an impotent knocking of one's head

against a rocky outcropping. This improves the dramatic interest and intensifies the focus on the contest of wills.

Thorslev, we have seen, distinguished between fatalism, the control of external events by Fate, and determinism, which includes Necessity and broadens the scope of fatalism to include the human will. He looks to *Manfred* as an example of fatalism, hence the latitude of Manfred's will, though he is impotent over the general surge of things. Steffan, in *Lord Byron's "Cain,"* takes this distinction and concludes that Cain's act of murder was not predestined in that it must be seen as independently willed, though deriving in a more general way from what was predestined: original sin. Byron, however, makes such an issue of Cain's innate, uncontrollable restlessness, his stubborn and contrary nature, so diluting the concept of freewill, that the distinction again begins to fade. Steffan does see that in *Heaven and Earth*, "predestination was a rigid truth" (28), that "Noah and his sons were God's chosen people," leaving them without independent will, so lacking in real power: "Japhet's love and pity for Anah could not cancel his own election or prevent her damnation." This is to say that *Heaven and Earth* reiterates the themes of *Cain*, but with a milder, sadder, less spirited central character. *Don Juan* is not far behind.

Faith, in life if not in art, is always deepest when it is most under duress, for then most needed. As Byron and Coleridge both suffered grievously in their own minds and hearts, both grew stronger in their faiths as a result. This was easier for Byron as each new grief confirmed the maliciousness of Fate, just as he needed it to do. Conversely, each pain chewed away at Coleridge's confidence in his Christian God. Therefore, Coleridge had to try to blame his griefs on himself whenever he could at all justify it: "I have prayed with drops of agony on my Brow, trembling . . . before the Justice of my Maker. . . . 'I gave thee so many Talents. What has thou done with them?'" (ltr. to Cottle, 26 Apr 1814). He was often driven, however, when the weight was excessive or his innocence undeniable, the opposite direction, toward the unthinkable. Byron, on the other hand, residing half way toward the unthinkable already, needed to point the accusing finger outside himself, flinging culpability in the direction of others. He was tempted to internal guilt only secondarily, almost wilfully, when external abuse or misfortune did not offer sufficient oppressions. He was an even less

secure man than Coleridge, sadly defensive at his worst:

I shall live to have to pity you all one day . . . time & Nemesis will do that which I would not. . . . no one was ever even the involuntary cause of great evils to others--without a requital--I have paid and am paying for mine--so will you. (ltr. to Annabella, 5 Mar 1817)

Coleridge occasionally did attribute his misfortunes to external powers, typically justified as inscrutable Providence (e.g. ltr. to Murray 23 Aug 1814), or indirectly, as on the weather (ltr. to Morgan, 28 Feb 1812), or on the neglect or calumny of others (ltr. to J. Wedgwood, 1 Dec 1812, and Stuart, 2 Sept 1814). But he was more obsessed with inner Necessity: "what I am depends on what I have been. . . . those weaknesses and defects in my character, which so many untoward circumstances have concurred to plant there . . ." (ltr. to Poole, Feb 1797). The will, always weakⁱⁿ Coleridge's Christianity, cannot even hope for virtue without the hand of grace, an Augustinian view that Coleridge, like St. Augustine, verified within himself. That his own will should resolutely drag him to opium continually reinforces this truth. His lassitude also confirms the necessarily errant will, a will that, even when the virtuous path is detected, perversely seeks to drag him the other way. In his own heart, he knows the truth of St. Augustine and the sophistry of Aquinas, who would have us trust reason and the will to recognize virtue, a good greater or lesser. Raised in a humanist age, he would have wanted humanism reconciled with morality and faith, but his own perverse will argued otherwise. He neglects his work, he believes, not in spite of a recognition of his duty, but because duty tells him he should not neglect it: "it is a deep and wide disease in my moral nature" (*Anima Poetae*, Jan 1804)--again, evil as disease, not error. He ever saw himself led to the crumbling edge of the chasm of purposelessness, his will not his own, longing for the embrace of divine parental benevolence, the kindly shepherd carrying him bleating from the brink. Dangers are unceasing for one whose will is weak, and for Coleridge, when neither faith nor companions could fill his bottomless need for solace, opium soothed his fears and pains with a sure if clammy hand.

Opium he calls "this wretched vice" (ltr. to Dr. Gillman, [13 Apr 1816]), indicating acceptance of culpability, of corrupt intention, the seat of all vice. But

the underside of this saintly, if sad exterior tells a different tale:

Should I have success in my dramatic enterprizes as to be able to say--'for six months to come I am not under the *necessity* of doing any-thing!' I have strong hopes that I should emancipate myself altogether from this most pitiable Slavery. . . . (ltr. to R. H. Brabant, Dec 1815).

"Slavery" and "vice" differ absolutely on the question of culpability. The facade at times cracks, and his frustration at having to suffer for what seems so beyond the control of the flaccid will God had supplied him we see behind the optimism: "It sometimes happen that we are punished for our faults by incidents, in the causation of which these faults had no share: and this I have always felt to be the severest punishment" (*BL* 2: 24.207).

Idealism allows Coleridge further to anchor all our moral universe in the will, chaining us indissolubly to culpability, making just moral approbation and disapprobation. In "Frost at Midnight" (1798), he celebrates God as the author of the human will, the creator of our desires when we are worthy of ourselves: "Great universal Teacher! he shall mould / Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask." True, his conception of Providence allows for God to be the final cause of all sin, but only in a manner that equally leaves man fully culpable. Yet, though fully aware of this, he still often throws up his hands in despair, in howls of innocence unjustly persecuted. But they are cries rather than accusations; he was always constrained by his own ethics and theology from fully absolving himself of blame, or directly accusing God of injustice. The worst injustice somehow must be explained as "a Father that is chastising" (*BL* 2: 24.208).

Saints have long felt that no physical or mental torments could match the emotional emptiness of the alternative, and if this identifies a saint, Coleridge was one. The more atheistic in implication was his experience, the more fervently did he prostrate himself before the divine benevolence that all hope demands must be there: "We live by Faith" (*Friend* No. 5, 14 Sept 1809; *Works* 4: 2.68). But he understood human nature to a great depth, and this knowledge often cruelly enervated the nepenthe of self-deception. Nothing is more characteristic of human nature than that faith flourishes when most oppressed, when the universe seems most cruel and untenanted of its God. Nothing is more characteristic of

Coleridge than that he should honestly and with immense perception think deeply into things which other men shun or from which shield themselves with platitudes, that he should suffer demons day and night for his courage while timid men sleep well, and that finally he should back away in trembling from the blackness whose terrors no one has the mind to see as clearly as he. Nothing is as unfair than that he should suffer criticism, dismissal, even ridicule, at the pen of pedants (including myself) for his shrinking from the prospect of the moral unknown, the dark of a groundless, purposeless universe, into which we of the twentieth century have wandered, unknowing, unchoosing.

IV.E Necessitated Pathways

Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eò perductus, ut non tantum rectè facere possim, sed nisi rectè facere non possim.⁸⁵

Associationism offered a guarantee of a progression, in whatever direction the sensations would lead. Its popularity arose from the sanction its plausible mechanism gave to the Lockean hope that virtuous sensations would inevitably, necessarily lead to a virtuous person. This pathway of good, the initial external influences leading to virtue as habit, characterized Wordsworth's moral system above all. The belief, the hope, that the development of men from children could be directed necessarily to good or to evil ("The child is father to the man") had typically been either of the Lockean sort, the inculcation of impressions, or of the Aristotelean sort, where right behavior leads to right belief. Religiousness demanded that intention should always precede belief, so Locke proved far more amenable to what the Romantics sought in morality.

Christianity had always stressed that moral choice must have consequences, that engaging in vice must be shown to lead both to more vice and to punishment, as virtue will replicate itself and bring reward. No more central pillar to morality exists. Civil justice, custom, mythology, art, all direct their greatest efforts in enforcing this Necessity or the belief in this Necessity. The need that just consequences be assured gives power to gods, power over men that as explanations for the workings of Nature alone they did not need.

Aristotle first codifies the idea into an ethic of practical living. He plainly sees that the Socratic "no man does evil willingly" answers neither for the actual experience of men nor for the needs of universal moral order: "it is true that no one is unwilling to be blessed, but not true that wickedness is involuntary . . ." (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5.4). The wicked man freely chose evil earlier in his life,

⁸⁵"Not only consciously good, but so habituated by training that I not only can act rightly, but cannot act otherwise" (Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* CXX, 10; as appended by Wordsworth in 1837 as the motto to "Ode to Duty.")

certainly passed by numerous opportunities to reform, opportunities which gradually diminished until his wickedness had become virtually determined. A pragmatic thinker, Aristotle defended the pathways of good and evil on the basis of the needs of morality. The evildoer, even more than the virtuous man, must be held culpable, which means he must have freewill, especially in the early stages; equally though, evil must be shown to have evil consequences, that men will be discouraged from it; but finally the Necessity of the pathway of vice must not be so thorough that reform is ever impossible, so that both hope and culpability remain viable.

Christianity shared the need, as Luther warned: "God-ward man has no 'free will,' but is a captive, slave, and servant either to the will of God or the will of Satan."⁸⁶ We recall Marlowe's Faustus, seeking more than once to renounce his evil path, but unable to do so, sometimes owing to insincerity--the inner Necessity undeterred--once seeing in himself this very hardening of his heart, and once almost literally being restrained from rising by a force from below. Coleridge speaks frequently of the "tyranny of sin" and becoming a "slave to vicious habits" (*Aids*, Prudential. Aphorisms, no. 11), expressions which are not clichés for him but have true resonance. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge uses the play *Atheista Fulminato* and its protagonist, Don Juan, to illustrate the manner in which evil will reproduce its own (*BL* 2: 23.185ff).

The Necessity of virtue in the growth of the mind occupied us in the earlier discussion on associationism and need not long detain us here. One apparent contradictory instance in Wordsworth warrants a closer look, however. In "Michael" (1800), the son, despite the finest Wordsworthian upbringing in an Elysium of rural values, still fell into evil in the city. This might well threaten the theory of the Necessity of virtue, something Wordsworth would not be expected to do at this stage of his poetry, especially in a clearly didactic tale. We are left with intimations, however, that the son's subsequent flight from his crimes or vices to the sea was motivated partly by shame. It would be as Coleridge describes in "The Progress of Vice" (1790):

⁸⁶*De Servo arbitrio*, trans. Henry Cole; qtd. in Drew 100.

But soon to tempt the Pleasures cease;
Yet Shame forbids the return to peace,
And stern Necessity will force
Still to urge on the desperate course.

The son in "Michael" we must assume will spend a lifetime now upon the sea, his virtue ultimately too strong for temporary vice but too late recovered; forever now he wanders in regret and longing.

Definitely, we may claim for Wordsworth the continuing hope, if not steady belief, in the Necessity of virtue in this life, a Necessity increasingly tinged with idealist and revelatory sublimities, but never entirely leaving the Aristotelean world of the values of daily, social living. Even as late as *The Excursion*, the Wanderer affirms that

 the Man--
Who . . . communes with the Forms
Of nature . . .
 needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love . . .
 he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love . . .
 and a kindred joy. . . .
(4.1207-17)

The "Man" (capitalization implies generalized, even ideal man) who communes with the "Forms of Nature"⁸⁷ finds he has accepted a divine "spirit," finds he must "bend," pay religious homage, to divinity as expressed in "Nature's humbler power" (1191, 1190). Still, association breathes in his system, as his choosing of the good becomes habituated good; "he cannot choose / But seek" the ever deeper knowledge. As virtue grows, the increasingly religious mind attends earthly specifics, particulars:

 time will come
When they shall meet no object but may teach
Some acceptable lesson to their minds
Of human suffering, or of human joy.
(4.1235ff)

⁸⁷Wordsworth's Platonism never banishes phenomenal, sensual Nature, implying the noumenal through the experienced.

But most unlike Coleridge, Shelley, or even Keats, revelation remains planted on earth, looking not to the empyrean but upon his fellows (looking, perhaps, a bit patronizingly at them, but at least looking).

Unlike virtue, the progress of vice almost never warrants a mechanism. True, as I have said, association explains the development of the mind irrespective of the nature of the impressions, but the Romantic poets never once described evil as a possible product of the association of ideas, never even considering approaching morality, say, negatively, from an interruption in the associative progress of harmful impressions. Still, no one doubted the Necessity of vice, more entrenched in the ethics of human culture than the Necessity of virtue. As Wordsworth writes Matthews: the present government "are already so deeply advanced in iniquity that like Macbeth they cannot retreat" (7 Nov 1794).

As I have said, Wordsworth diverges sharply from Coleridge by admitting virtually no evil at all into his works. He remained an Enlightenment humanist in morality, unseduced by medieval or Calvinist duality, as Coleridge and Byron did not. The Socratic "evil is error" (i.e. no man does evil knowingly or willingly) remained an implied if not often overt truth for him. Only the Coleridge-inspired *The Borderers* demonstrates autonomous evil in Wordsworth, the play a conscious twin with Coleridge's *Osorio* and a measure of his descent into despair in 1796. From the valley of 1796-97, following *The Borderers*, Wordsworth continued his brief examination of evil with his only attempt to deduce a mechanism to explain it, not associative, but in the same analytical (i.e. "Newtonian") spirit. His essay on the character of Oswald, "Growth of a Criminal Mind,"⁸⁸ approaches the subject from the general truth that passions alone can motivate action, never reason alone. That he should stand on this assumption in a study of Oswald belies the commonplace that *The Borderers* explores and attacks pure rationalism.

Wordsworth and Coleridge both concern themselves in the 1790's with the necessary consequences of social injustice. Coleridge, in "The Outcast" (1794),

⁸⁸1797, incorporated as a "Preface to *The Borderers*"; *Prose Works* 1: 76ff.

fears for the slide into sin of one unjustly turned out from the embrace of domestic love and trust, because "Vice alone will shelter Wretchedness." Why, he does not explain. Wordsworth, in "Guilt and Sorrow" and other poems, makes much of this, but he is pursuing suffering as he did in France, more from the sublimity of it all. In "The Two Thieves" (1800), Wordsworth tells us of the progressive nature of vice, as specified in the subtitle, "The Last Stage of Avarice." Despite the jovial, forgiving, even cheerful tone, the message remains that of the necessity of sin for those who would place value in earthly things. He illustrates here that restless insatiability he describes as "Restlessness" in the passage quoted above from *The Friend*. Daniel's original error, succumbing to easy reason and custom, has become habit:

He once had a heart which was moved by the wires
Of manifold pleasures and many desires:
And what if he cherished his purse? 'Twas no more
Than treading a path trod by thousands before.

The durability of the pathway of vice, even down generations, is suggested in the learning of the trade by Daniel's grandson.

For Coleridge, the reformer must attend to education: to help those led down the pathway of vice by folly, who base even worthy hopes on unworthy principles (i.e. secular not Christian truths, like many radicals), or innocently, out of ignorance or ingenuousness, like the poor (as in Coleridge's silliness at explaining the poor driven to the alehouse by a lack of cheap newspapers--*Watchman* No. 1; *Works* 2: 11). The evangelist, by contrast, must tackle the corrupt will, the region of darkness saved only when opened to grace. Such men of evil intent included slave traders (see *Lecture on the Slave Trade*, 1795; *Works* 1: 247) and Robespierre and his crew:

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
They burst their manacles and wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
("France: An Ode," 1798, 85ff)

As with Dante's willing damned, these gradually come to seek the evil they do, driven by a self-justifying yet self-damning blindness.

The great motive power in Coleridge forcing forward the Necessity of virtue in man was his conscience. In the early years, we detect scant hints of the sort of doctrine of conscience he would devise later (see chapter five). Conscience works negatively as a factor in the Necessity of vice as it punishes by inner guilt, and positively as a factor of pain in the pleasure and pain mechanism bringing the miscreant to repentance. In the current "gothic" fiction, both generally occurred. The villain suffers for his evil, justified solely as punishment, by the work of Nemesis (an intractable human need that Christianity, with its "turn the other cheek," has failed to reverse). Yet, by the final curtain he often is transformed (though not Zastrozzi or Byron's "Turkish" heroes), more by his unsparing conscience than any other reason. The agent of the conscience, guilt, Wordsworth employs as the efficacious force in "Guilt and Sorrow" (1796) and Coleridge in *Osorio* (1796), the villain of which knew remorse as a "hell within him, / . . . a fiery whirlwind in his conscience!" (II.324-25). The whirlwind, as a biblical metaphor, signals us that Coleridge did link the conscience to divine retribution. The villain is carried to repentance, to die with a cleansed soul and justice again reigning in the universe, as all tragedies should and, in the early years of Romanticism, usually did end.

The prominence of the necessitated pathway to vice to Christian ethics is demonstrated in Coleridge's very earliest verse. In "Happiness" (1791), reason (wisdom) warns the young subject to beware the effect of vice, which is slavery:

Ah! listen Youth, ere yet too late,
What evils on thy course may wait!
To bow the head, to bend the knee,
A minion of Servility,
At low Pride's frequent frowns to sigh,
And watch the glance in Folly's eye. . . .

In fact, he goes on to claim that for ingenuous youth, a falling into sin is inevitable: when offered the "goblet" of temptation, "thou shalt drink. . . ."

An earlier poem, as we know, is even called "The Progress of Vice" (1790):

Deep in the gulph of Vice and Woe
Leaps Man at once with headlong throw?
Him inborn Truth and Virtue guide,
Whose guards are Shame and conscious Pride.
In some gay hour Vice steals into the breast;

Perchance she wears some softer Virtue's vest.
By unperceiv'd degrees she tempts to stray,
Till far from Virtue's path she leads the feet away.

We have here a mimicry of the standard morality tale, and he continues the poem in the manner of a Hogarth print in verse.⁸⁹ The third section of Wordsworth's "Michael" is in this vein, a long tradition, but ever more popular from the Renaissance, as the lower and middle classes gained literacy and financial power.

when lust
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by leud and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose
The divine property of her first being.
(Milton, *Comus* 466ff)

We see here the external nature of evil, the recurring theme, common to ethical systems though not universal, that only good is innate, a part of our being. There exists no inner evil, only inner weakness. Coleridge at first defends his Calvinism with the understanding that original sin manifests itself as that weakness; that our corrupt natures consist of a vulnerability to the wiles of external evils. Later, Kant's innate "good will" would have fitted comfortably into this belief had Coleridge not moved away from even this compromised humanism. While never actually asserting that evil was indeed generated from within, yet, driven by the dramatic example of his opium addiction, he grew more and more disillusioned with the heart and the easy virtue of that weak organ.

By his optimism he knew that all in the universe eventually resolved itself to good. At first he did not think this irreconcilable with the Christian insistence that man attribute all the good he receives to God and all the evil to himself (defended by Milton in *Paradise Lost* with the vigor of a soldier who knows the

⁸⁹I will grant that this sophomoric stuff ill pleases the ear, but a man's beliefs are formed from the earliest days and maturity only improves the style, not often the content of their expression.

weakness of his position). Coleridge resolved these on the difference between final and efficient cause, retaining human culpability. This hopeful Necessity of virtue, ensured solely by the impulse of the good will, requiring only the removal of the tyrannies of custom, government, society, etc., we find in Pantisocracy: "The leading Idea of Pantisocracy is to make men *necessarily* virtuous by removing all Motives to Evil--all possible Temptations" (ltr. to Southey, 21 Oct [1794]). In *A Moral and Political Lecture* (1795), we are reminded that evil, not good, needs a cause: "Our object is to destroy pernicious systems not their misguided adherents. Philosophy imputes not the great evil to corrupted but to the system which presents the temptation to the corruption. The evil must cease when the cause is removed . . ." (*Works* 1: 18-19). This dangerous resurgence of ideological certainty (medieval intolerance here bequeathed to the twentieth century) was reborn intact in young Shelley, but he too drifted away, for similar cause and in a roughly similar direction. Kant, in his "good will," precedes Coleridge in the reversal of Enlightenment consequences to neoreligious intentionalism, but he retains the humanist belief in innate goodness that Coleridge does not. Insofar as Christianity, especially Protestantism, stands on intention, and it does so far more in theory than in practice (Christianity being ever flexible), then it is the enemy of social progress, defined in modern times as the amelioration of the lot of the underprivileged.

But most of this early Coleridge was superficial, as I have already said. Concurrent with his apparent advocacy of innate goodness and Pantisocracy, we have seen evidence that he did not assume it was universal, or universally efficacious. In "Lines on a Friend: Who Died of a Frenzy Fever . . ." (1794) the path to virtue is open only "If" we are blessed, or elect, "gifted with th' Ithuriel lance of Truth. . . ." On the other hand, his mature attitude which looks more strongly to grace and favor of God, does not prevent him from claiming that "the remedy" to evil in the heart is but "the habituation of the Intellect to clear, distinct and adequate conceptions" of the true nature of the worldly things about us (*Friend* No. 5, 14 Sept 1809; *Works* 4: 2.71-72), which puts him back with "evil as error." The key to this is the public nature of these two sources, his youthful poetry, in which he is mimicking rather than thinking, and his periodicals, in which he amends his message for more willing consumption by a readership he

hardly respects.

Ultimately, Coleridge prefers to be convinced that good will out. I have observed that no necessity of evil can be allowed by a responsible morality to go beyond the point of all possible recovery, that in a divinely created universe the good must persist, though clearly not always ascendant. Still, hope cannot exist if its object does not exist (as Kant argued), and if virtue survives, it must eventually triumph:

Happily for mankind . . . the obstacles which a consistently evil mind no longer finds in itself, it finds in its own unsuitableness to human nature. A limit is fixed to its power . . ." (*Friend*, 1818, 1: 16; *Works* 4: 1.122).⁹⁰

Providence, which he could never abandon, kept pushing him back toward optimism, which we have already seen him driven from by personal tragedy. This Providence controls the Necessity of virtue. In fact, proving the necessitated pathways, as fundamental as I have said them to be to morality, might also be a means of demonstrating the care and attention of the divine Father in the affairs of men. He would prove if he could,

the old, old Methusalem saw that "evil produces evil." One error almost compels another. Tell one lie, tell a hundred. Oh, to show this *a priori*, by bottoming it in all our faculties and by experience of touching examples! (*AP*, Potter ed. 175)

This, in fact, was exactly what Coleridge had tried to do in his early verse, and Wordsworth was doing continually. His problem here was that having discounted empirical proofs, he needed idealized examples that would still convince as truth, convince, that is, the heart ("touching examples").

Most of the "touching examples" we encounter in Wordsworth encourage us to feel suffering as vaguely redemptive, cathartic for us and elevating for the sufferer. Suffering may appear negatively as well, as another stroke of the lash down the road of the Necessity of vice or evil, self-perpetuating, "growing upon what it feeds," at once cause and effect. Oswald observes that misery is the surest

⁹⁰See also *BL* 2: 23.186.

way "to degrade a man." Wordsworth's favorite sufferers, martyred women, exemplify best this moral didacticism, and most regularly in the years of his best work, the Coleridge years (1796-1805). The outcast, abandoned young lass of "Guilt and Sorrow" begins the parade. Margaret, of *The Ruined Cottage* (1798), declines in the descending gyre of penury, suffering a decay of fortunes, of health, of hope, and significantly, surrounded by an empathic Nature in decline around her. The woman of "The Baker's Cart" (1796-97) finds misery enough from being "denied / The common food of hope." Misery breeds misery; her increasing willfulness further enslaving her, precisely as Wordsworth describes vice leading the restless heart in his "Preface to *The Borderers*." Her mind is driven,

to that state
In which all past experience melts away,
And the rebellious heart to its own will
Fashions the laws of Nature.

The Necessity of evil means an increasing loss of freedom, what Muirhead says of Coleridge's concept of "the enslavement of the will by the rejection of its own law in favour of mere natural inclination" (244), that is, the volition rules the will, instead of the reverse. We have seen this in Daniel, of Wordsworth's "The Two Thieves" (1800). Redemption then "is the resumption of the law into the will and its consequent restoration to perfect freedom" (see *Aids*, "Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion," No. 19). Thus, for Coleridge, since "Christianity and redemption are equivalent terms," then Christianity equals freedom.

For his own slavery man remains culpable. Kubla Khan neglected his heart, thus sacrificing virtuous intentions, and made effect into cause by bowing to the Baal of his volition (like Daniel of "The Two Thieves, to his "pleasure"). Turning to the transient things of the earth, he turned his back on God.⁹¹ Kubla Khan's efforts mirrored the errors of the revolutionaries of France and ultimately of all

⁹¹I offer here a limited reading of "Kubla Khan" from only one of many justifiable accounts. I hope to stress, however, the central message which unites them all: the truth of the inner, organic impulse, the mistaken, restrictive, even evil edifice which endeavors to oppress or enervate it, and the necessity of divine Nemesis, of inner and outer power, to redress and redeem.

men, in that all that he built in the world were but reflections of himself, images of his own polarity of outer pleasure and inner lifelessness (a heart hardened like ice): "A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!" (The inner lifelessness that "caves of ice" suggest recall the Death-in-Life that was the fate of the Ancient Mariner.) Even more, Coleridge tells us through Kubla Khan that the only work that we do on earth is the building of ourselves, that external efforts have reality or value only in what they possess of us and what they tell of our intentions. Our deeds and the heart that produced them synthesize into a single act, a single thing upon which we may be judged. Kubla Khan, in his hubris and the wickedness that hubris can only bring, dooms himself to the retribution of God/Nemesis, where the agents are men, driven like Kubla Khan by their folly: "'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far / Ancestral voices prophesying war!" War leads to revenge, injustice, and more war as the actions of the past prophesy, determine those to come. To this Necessity of crime and bestiality are the lives and generations of men reduced when they harden their hearts. Again, Providence punishes men through men, and a man through himself. A man may escape the Necessity only as an individual man, alone, through a single act of his unconscious moral will. Such an act, and such an escape from what otherwise cannot but come to the emperor with the hardened heart, brings us to the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798).

"The Ancient Mariner" is in fact a tale with only two "free" acts, there being only two events in the entire episode that include freewill. In each, however, the "free" will still acts not by its own impulsion, hardly in a manner which could be called self-determination.

The first act of human will occurs with the shooting of the Albatross, and it is an act of unmotivated randomness, that is, willfulness. All other action in the narrative, of the Mariner or the Wedding-Guest is caused.

He holds him with his glittering eye--
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.
(13ff)

These lines, written by Wordsworth, must be read as a comment on the illusion of

freewill. We are told that the Wedding-Guest "cannot choose but hear," but we also know that the Mariner cannot choose but tell. The Wedding-Guest sees himself as under the power of the Mariner, transfixed as by a snake (as are we, for the narrator gently maneuvers us into the role of the Wedding-Guest). Then, Coleridge allows us to realize by the end of the tale that the Mariner hath not his will either, unless we define freewill as Coleridge intends that we define it, as obedience to a higher purpose. From the beginning, then, we are encouraged to share the illusion of the Wedding-Guest in seeing the Mariner as possessed of a powerful will, and only later do we come to realize that the Mariner is possessed by a powerful will not exclusively his own. So are we informed that our sense of freewill is only illusion, that we but choose our masters (as Luther had said). The free choice so important to culpability, exists only at the moment of accepting or changing that master.

The Mariner becomes an allegory of man completely necessitated, a necessitated Everyman. His one act purely of his own will is an act defined exactly as the necessitarians said a free act would have to be, one of complete unmotivated randomness. They had claimed that an act absolutely devoid of motive, or perfectly balanced between conflicting motives was impossible. Priestley strongly emphasizes this point in his arguments with Price (see Price, or Priestley's *Necessity*). But Coleridge needed the will isolated, in the absence of God. So the Mariner shot the albatross, sinned against God, as a white, aerial creature appearing as if by heaven sent and traditionally bringing good luck can only be interpreted as representative of the divine spirit in some sense. Coleridge's Christianity demanded that the unaided, unguided human will could not, by definition, act morally. Among others, he aimed this message at the humanists, who would put faith in the autonomous human heart. This tale buries the good will, the humanist innately good heart, for Coleridge. He would show the disciples of Hume and Godwin that man must come to grief when he fails to entrust his will to God.

So the Mariner reaps the whirlwind for his willfulness. Necessitated consequences thunder down upon him, and this moral tale sweeps forward into the mainstream of moral narrative. Coleridge's own *The Wanderings of Cain* (1798) recalls a prominent example, and presents a sinner suffering for all eternity

for a single act.⁹² In the same vein is the story of the Wandering Jew, on which Coleridge had planned a romance (Chambers 67) and which was to fascinate Shelley, telling of eternal penance on earth for a single sin (the mocking of Christ and refusing Him aid).

Even worse, the Mariner comes to suffer like Lear and Christabel, even like Io, far in excess of any restoring of the balance required by Moira. I do not wish to minimize the differences in each of these stories, but I do see them as tapping a consistent and universal theme. This tradition attempts not simply to warn of the consequences of sin or error, but to make a religious point by showing confirmed, unlimited, and potentially eternal suffering for a single act. The prototype for this story may, of course, be found in Adam and Eve, not only insofar as the suffering derives from a single act, but that it is, as in all these cases, an act against God or the divine order not merely against a fellow man, and that the retribution thunders on unceasingly, smashing presumptive humanist notions of balanced or proportional justice. Also, importantly, the consequences (the punishments) engulf the innocent as well (be they the generations after Adam, Cordelia, or the crew of the Mariner's ship). This extent of suffering, and the inclusion of innocents, roundly mocks all secular assumptions of justice. The humanist may well object, as the punishment in *Samson Agonistes* we are told is "Unseemly . . . in human eie, / Too grievous for the trespass or omission" (690-91). But if our religious need for a divine parent is an echo of childhood, so too might be this need to affirm a necessary retribution whose justification exceeds our understanding.

Another source of the Mariner's seemingly unjust sufferings we have already found in Coleridge's own weakness and its consequences of opium addiction: "What crime is there scarcely which has not been included in or followed from the one guilt of taking opium?" (ltr. to Morgan, 14 May 1814). He refers to personal sins, the lies, deceptions, estrangement from friends, neglect of his

⁹²This was a work, an abortive collaboration with Wordsworth, attempting to "imitate the Death of Abel" by the German Gessner. However, "the whole scheme . . . broke up in a laugh: and the Ancient Mariner was written instead," ("Prefatory Note" to "The Wanderings of Cain").

talents, and physical torments the drug has wrung from him:

I used to think the text of St. James that 'he who offended in one point, offends in all,' very harsh; but now I feel the awful, the tremendous truth of it. In the one crime of OPIUM, what crime have I not made myself guilty of?--Ingratitude to my Maker! and to my benefactors--injustice! and *unnatural cruelty to my poor children!*--self-contempt for my repeated promise-breach, nay, too often, actual falsehood! (ltr. to Josiah Wade, 26 Jun 1814)

Yet, unlike a tale of social or utilitarian morality, the religious tale builds on a foundation of the unexperienced and the undemonstrable, a basis in faith that makes it extremely vulnerable to disbelief. Religion, be it Christian or pagan (like the pantheism implicit in *King Lear*), posits by definition superhuman power or powers which demand respect or obedience. And unlike utilitarian, or anthropocentric morality, morals based on superhuman powers that happen to be omnipotent and omniscient begin to speak in absolutes. They begin to require absolute obedience, the alternative to which can only be absolute disobedience (as in the St. James referred to by Coleridge above). This makes for a brittle fragility of religious moral law, a vulnerability forcing the believer to heighten the fear of disobedience by greatly worsening the consequences (e.g. an eternity of suffering). Our religious sense intuitively understands that fear must complement simple loyalty or the perception of the good.

The Mariner's act, the actual means by which he turns from God, is much like King Lear's, the rending apart of the natural or divine order of Nature. Lear sins by cleaving asunder the natural bonds and hierarchy of the family which itself follows his unnatural cleaving of the natural unity of England into disparate parts. The Mariner destroys the link that Nature provides between God and man, rejecting the bringer of God's will, the angelic albatross. A world without the will of God is a world without providential Necessity, a world of chance. The spectre ship and his own vessel move variously along the necessitated pathways of good and evil, neither having choice. Chance Coleridge allies with evil (see chapter one). First, a random act precipitates the evil, and later, chance appears the tool of Life-in-Death. This latter instance, where Life-in-Death wins the game of chance for the soul of the Mariner, makes clear Coleridge's feeling that living in a universe without purpose (the very definition of a universe that allowed for

chance) would be living without meaning, without that which gave life its only value, even distinguished it from death at all. Mechanical necessitarianism answers for chance, but it does not supply purpose, and this, for Coleridge, was the very definition of life.

The second act that involves freewill comes with the spontaneous blessing of the sea-snakes. This moment occurs as the exact antithesis of the act of shooting the Albatross, in its motivation, its character, and its effect. First, the effect of the act is to bond the Mariner (mankind) again to the divine order, the visible things of God (his creatures), and in doing so heal the rift caused by the earlier action. Second, the character of the act is one of silent internal love rather than loud external violence. Third, in motivation, the first act happened randomly, without cause, with even the sudden and direct simplicity of the line emphasizing how completely in a vacuum did the act arise. The blessing, however, came from God, through a will made passive (in the Wordsworthian way) that divine grace might work through it.

Both acts lack freewill in the normal sense, as I have said, but both acts define freewill, in its good and evil incarnations, in Christian theology. The will of man, left on its own, must fall into evil. Any choice it attempts, without having been purified by a divinity external to itself, must precipitate evil, simply because its own internal nature is corrupt (original sin). (The hostility of this to both humanism, pantheism, and Neo-Platonism again suggests why Wordsworth was a reluctant Christian.) Yet this same will of man, if guided by God, cannot but follow the divine law, seek the summum bonum. The act of blessing the sea-snakes is one where the human will and the divine will act in concert, become one. But this can only happen by the human will becoming completely passive to the divine will, acting not at all, but as a conduit to the divine. So in fact, in both acts the human will acted in accordance with its inner nature; it was the inner nature which changed, from one amoral to one redeemed and newly divine, transformed by grace. Freewill now we may define as the human will acting according to its own principles without fail, necessitated by itself, without external influence. This will lead necessarily either to evil or good depending on the inner nature of that will, whether it be in a blessed or unblessed state.

Similarly, Prometheus commits only a single wilful act within *Prometheus Unbound*, his recanting of his curse (not the curse itself, notice, but the hatred that propelled it). Overall, he makes two willed and one unwilled acts. In Coleridge's divine universe, an act of willful evil (apparently willful, generated in the corrupt inner nature), against God, could only be recompensed by one of unwilled blessing. In a mirror image of this, in Shelley's Manichaean allegory, Prometheus acted originally with willed goodness (benefiting man) in concord with (Shelley's) God, i.e. moral law. It was for an act of goodness, not sin, that he was punished, and the two cases are mirrored further by the opposition of Coleridge's benign versus Shelley's tyrannous ruling powers. The difference is only superficial, however, as Shelley has in reserve a true divinity, where power and morality do come together as they do in Coleridge's Providence. Prometheus' one unwilled act comes in the curse itself, and for this he must suffer. So, both suffer for a will having acted rashly, blindly, but Prometheus is recompensed by an act of (again) willed humility.

Even Prometheus' "willed" acts enjoy only marginally, superficially more liberty than the Mariner's, and the difference has as much to do with the didactic intent of each poet--Coleridge to oppose the autonomous will because it is corrupt, Shelley to oppose any tyranny which would oppose the will, because it is innately moral (any tyranny which would "war with thought" as Byron had put it). Shelley, the necessitarian, would no more leave the will to its own devices than Coleridge, he only imagined a different sort of god to which we are in fealty.

In "The Ancient Mariner," all true efficacious power remains with the forces of good and evil (and even the latter only by divine sufferance); the humans have none. In the bony grasp of Life-in-Death, his master in sin, man finds himself totally powerless to effect his own salvation:

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.
(244ff)

The "wicked whisper" comes to him as an evil parody of the divine whisper of our conscience. The negation of his will appears in distinct contrast to the

movements of the moon, enjoying the freedom of the divine order. Unlike the ship and mariners who throughout the tale are only acted upon, emphasized by passive verbs, the moon is "moving," not moved, is "going up," not taken:

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star to two beside--

Coleridge so wants us to understand the freedom that is self-determination by a will concordant with God's will that he includes as freedom even the Newtonian laws, contrasting this with the Mariner in the marginal gloss: "In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward."

And most damning of all for Coleridge, the great horror of his heart, is that word "loneliness." Notice the emotional climate of the passage, so dry and parching. The Mariner is both lonely and powerless ("fixedness"); the two are mutually necessary, for both are remedied by God, and only by God. This is his message in the moon. Estranged from God, we are alone and vulnerable in a universe of evil and chance, as a lamb without its shepherd. Necessity then brings necessary evil that we cannot prevent. Philosophic and theological arguments only pointlessly vex the ship--where, on an empty deck in an empty sea, stands the Ancient Mariner, the personified nightmare of one of the loneliest of poets.

CHAPTER V

FREEDOM AS OBEDIENCE

In "The Gazelle," Byron offers two varieties of freedom: the unconstraint of the gazelle, Byron's standard negative freedom, and the harmony of purpose, of appropriateness or belonging, as in the palm. Amid Nature, only man is unfulfilled, wanting freedom of unconstraint and also wanting home or purpose ("Our temple"). We have seen in the chapter above how increasingly necessitated good or evil pathways--the effects of our choices returning to master us as causes of our future actions--leaves little room for freedom from causes, and that in fact morality demanded that negative freedom, freedom from causation, must be denied (hence Byron's "amoral" legacy). Real freedom, thus, becomes the ability of men to make the right choice, the choice of their own nature in its proper sphere. This "right" choice is ever toward concord with the rational order of Nature, and is bounded by concepts of universality, divinity, and eternity.

If I define Romanticism as in part a return to religiousness, the search mostly for a new, uncompromised, nonestablishment religion, then the unfulfilled Neo-Platonic unity of Wordsworth and Shelley, the Keatsian longing for transcendence through satiety, and Coleridgean idealism, define this quest. It is an escape from mechanical Necessity to divine organic Necessity, from humanist freedom and efficacy, to religious dependency, namely, to freedom of a different sort, a liberty of obedience. From this standpoint, Byron's irritable rejection of all that smacks of transcendence in general marks a sort of counterrebellion against Romanticism, but one which in fact only distorts it (a "negative romanticism").

This chapter in my argument is what Coleridge called a "Landing Place," the goal to where the Romantic employment and redefinition of Necessity had been evolving and the plateau from which the hopes supported by Necessity toppled. The previous four chapters have recounted the ascent; the sixth will examine the collapse. The plateau itself--the transcendent state, its achievement, evidences,

demands, and rewards--has been exhaustively described by others.⁹³ I will attempt to limit myself to summaries and references, and elaborate only where necessary.⁹⁴

Moral Necessity as a fully developed doctrine may be considered first in the visible manifestations, nature, and powers of the eternal, with which union is sought (the "Cosmology"); second, in the means by which unity is approached (the "Process of Revelation"); and third, in the moral implications of the unified state itself ("The Moral Duty").

V.A Cosmology

V.A.1 The Watching Parent: Symbols and Powers of Eternity

I wait thy breath, Great Parent!⁹⁵

Book eight of *The Prelude*, subtitled "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind," opens with sublime, maternal Nature--brooding Helvellyn--overlooking tiny, childlike man at play. The maternal metaphor implies that man's only secure tranquillity lies in his proper respect, devotion, and submission to Nature. This illustrates the chapter's subtitle, where "Love" implies considerable humility, the child's love of its mother, the part yearning to rejoin the whole.

I have mentioned already two Romantic conflicts: that between morality based on human nature (e.g. Hume) or on immutable, Platonic (Christian) realities, and that between the independent moral agency of Nature (pantheism) and religious orthodoxy. Requisite to resolving the first and defining the second are the

⁹³Some of whom I will mention in the course of this summary chapter.

⁹⁴This dissertation does have a complete chapter five, truncated here of its least original parts only because of external constraints on length.

⁹⁵Shelley, *Alastor* 45.

instances and symbols of the basic polarity: the schism between the eternal and the transient. Clearly, the attraction of eternal things, whether expressed as Platonic ideals or Newtonian mechanics, was religious. The eternal was typically Nature in extension, or Nature the temporal manifestation of the infinite, the visible form of the Platonic real. For Nature and the eternal does Wordsworth reserve his most devotional language (e.g. *Prelude* 6.538ff, and "Tintern Abbey").

Coleridge never doubted the redeeming power of divine parental omnipotence, his Providence, no matter in how pantheistic, mystical, mythological, or Neo-Platonic a way He was portrayed. Coleridge's imagery runs riot in his best years with incarnations of watching, providential forces: the undersea antarctic spirit of "The Ancient Mariner," the restless spirit of Christabel's mother, the Macbeth-mimicking witches in "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," Sleep ("Visit her, gentle Sleep") in "Dejection: An Ode," Tranquillity in "Ode to Tranquillity," the overwatching moon in many poems. Some of this is literary device, a familiar echo of classical styles become habit and innocently used. But for Coleridge it also reflects a mind endlessly in search of higher, paternal powers, happy to invent them when needed. As I have said, his own life of addiction, of physical and mental torments (no less real for being partially psychosomatic) supported and fed his obsession with helplessness and powerlessness. (All his characters share this vulnerability and contrast strongly with the typically resolute and independent people in Wordsworth.)

A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, every where
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.
("The Pains of Sleep," 1803)

Among the next generation, Keats found intimations of immortality in Wordsworth's Nature, in the unhurried permanence of the sea and mountains, the endless cycles of the seasons, the voice of Nature herself in the nightingale, unchanging and thoughtless. He found intimations in Love, where Shelley and Coleridge dwelt with it, though the three drank of quite different sorts of springs. And he found it in art, with the help of Hazlitt. Art for Keats, like ancient ruins for Wordsworth, differs from Nature in being enduring rather than eternal and as

such it best represents the fusion or synthesis of the immortal with the human transient.⁹⁶ Works of human hands and hopes are the most poignant of the sublime faces of eternity, as they slowly fail, decaying into separateness.

Most Romantics sought to deny the Platonic dualism of time, transience, corporeality, and mortality separated from eternity, divinity, and immortality. They only reluctantly succumbed to the Protestant insistence (implicit in the gothic) that man remained condemned, in mind as well as body to the mortal sphere. Coleridge and Byron, in their ways, committed themselves to Puritan dualism, while the others looked for various Neo-Platonic solutions to it. "[T]ime's destructive power," the Narrator in *The Excursion* advises, is "only capable to prey on things / Of earth, and human nature's mortal part" (6.621-23). Wordsworth's concept of unity, of the revelatory experience of being taken out of oneself meant the same experience as it did to Plotinus, who described ecstasy in the *Enneads* as "being lifted out of the body into myself; becoming eternal to all other things" (4: 8.1).

The conflict between the temporal and the eternal appears often openly and more often dimly in suggestion and allegory. In "Stray Pleasures" (1806), for example, the dancers bring brightness and gaiety, a sparkling bloom of life; but it is life that only momentarily flickers against the eternal silence. De Quincey touches on the heart of the poem's obsession, life thoughtlessly defiant, yet in inevitable bondage to death:

solitude . . . is the real possessor in fee of all things, but is waiting an hour or so for the dispossession of the dancing men and maidens who for that transitory hour are the true, but, alas! the fugitive tenants.⁹⁷

The poem brings a wonderful synthesis of images to bear in this brief picture of life, unutterably frail yet made of cheer and hope. Like "She was a Phantom of Delight," the eternal waits in huge patience to claim its own. The night advances to engulf them, bringing death, solitude, silence, all that men fear, while they drift

⁹⁶Though Wordsworth came in his maturity to allow art the power to give a stolen "moment" of "blest eternity" ("Upon the Sight of a Beautiful Picture" (1811).

⁹⁷"On Wordsworth's Poetry," *Literary Criticism* 229.

unstoppably to reunion with the great Neo-Platonic sea, the transcendence of Romantic hopes. Unmindful of the great symbol of time, "the sun going down to his rest," fully immersed in the timeless flow of both of Wordsworth's great symbols--over their heads the sky darkens, beneath their feet the river moves to the sea--they dance on. Heedless of time, they have, in their own minds, lifted themselves out of it. But the gift is imaginary and the night rolls in. Here, as in Kant and Coleridge, freedom lives in the mind; Necessity rules all else. Unfortunately, Wordsworth lacked the idealist's certainty that the mind harbored the true reality.

Nature, in *The Prelude*, reminds us of our bondage to time:

Thus long I lay
Cheered by the genial pillow of the earth
Beneath my head, soothed by a sense of touch
From the warm ground, that balanced me, else lost
Entirely, seeing nought, nought hearing, save
When here and there about the grove of oaks
Where was my bed, an acorn from the trees
Fell audibly, and with a startling sound.
(1.87ff)

Then, with that intrusive reminder of change and decay in the clock-like dropping of the acorns, the sun picks up the cadence of time by touching the horizon. The narrator, reminded of the world of time, arises to continue his life. Like him, the woman of "The Solitary Reaper" exists in both worlds, lost for a moment only in timeless reverie of song, in a sort of pastoral state of mind. Despite her inevitable mortality, she may, at these times at least, share in the eternal. The poet attributes to her song things out of time ("old," "has been, and may be again") and space ("far-off"), a transcendence through suffering ("sorrow, loss, or pain"). Such captured moments can never be on earth more than "stray pleasures," but they are of the greatest worth.

Where M. H. Abrams sees in Romanticism the "secularization of religious ideas,"⁹⁸ for my purposes, it might be more appropriate to put it the other way around. With the exception of the mature Coleridge, the Romantics sought not

⁹⁸*Natural Supernaturalism* 12.

the recovery of neglected religiousness but to build a religiousness out of the new scientism ("what was good in Godwin," as Coleridge said). Necessity was not abandoned as heretical so much as adopted and adapted. Abrams sees Wordsworth as picking up consciously the standard of Milton, attempting a theodicy, though an un-Christian one. Without actually disagreeing, I choose to look at Wordsworth's concern as more of a moral epistemology in the Enlightenment tradition, the affirmation of a developmental ethics, infused with a life-giving teleology. Even his exposition of suffering looks at its moralizing power and effects rather than its justification.⁹⁹

The employment of suffering to reach the hearts of his readers, to open a portal on the sublime, may be Wordsworth's most characteristic invocation of the eternal.¹⁰⁰ Wordsworth enlisted pastoral suffering of the most conventional sort: "there is often found / In mournful thoughts . . . A power to virtue friendly" ("The Ruined Cottage," in *Excursion* 1.632-34). "It soothed us--it beguiled us--then, to hear / Once more of troubles" ("Dedication" to "The White Doe," 1808, 33-34). But beyond convention, he harnessed its power for higher morality, Neo-Platonic and redemptive, to touch upon the infinite. This he makes explicit in lines he added to one of the most haunting passages in his early tragedy *The Borderers*, to form the "verse motto" of "The White Doe":

Action is transitory--a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle--this way or that--
'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And has the nature of infinity.
Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem
And irremovable) gracious openings lie,
By which the soul--with patient steps of thought
Now toiling, wafted now on wings of prayer--
May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds

⁹⁹Likewise, I am only in apparent conflict with the thrust of Richard Brantley's *Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism"*, for he and I trace parallel influences on Wordsworth, sacred and secular traditions which in the Romantic age a poet could still hope to merge in productive synthesis.

¹⁰⁰James Averill's *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* misdirects itself into aesthetics and poetics and never reaches the moral associative heart of Wordsworth's use of suffering.

Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent
Even to the fountain-head of peace divine.

This is what it means to find a portal on to the infinite, the means to revelation.

This passage is especially interesting in illuminating the evolution of Necessity in Wordsworth. The first six lines are from *The Borderers* (1539-44) and their import is to counter the mechanical philosophy, that which sought to describe the mind in terms of causal events, with the dark and infinite deeps of the mind, something we become aware of in the power of suffering. Suffering is opposite to the world of mechanism, being above time ("after-vacancy" and "permanent") and outside of locatable space ("infinity," "obscure," and "darkness"). The lines added a decade later attempt to take this refutation of a previous belief (giving him a negative freedom from it) toward a positive statement of a new transcendence (a positive freedom). He affirms here, though perhaps it is little more than rhetoric, visions of light at the end of the "dark passages" Keats saw him as exploring.

Keats himself was always Wordsworth's closest disciple. He writes to Bailey (Oct 1817): "there are no men thoroughly wicked, so as never to be self-spiritualized into a kind of sublime misery. . . ." Unlike Coleridge, and even Shelley, there was nothing in Keats, and little in young Wordsworth, specifically of a divine hand in this mild redemptive power. Yet even the most secular of the Romantics (i.e. Keats) needed the security of at least the faint shadow of teleology behind the mighty workings of the universe or heart. Never could things be allowed to function purely as purposeless mechanism, associative or Newtonian.

In *The Fall of Hyperion* Keats faces more directly than in the allegory of the Titans the Promethean mission and martyrdom of the poet. It is Keats himself, not a generalized narrator, whom Moneta confronts on the altar steps:

If thou canst not ascend
These steps, die on that marble where thou art.
Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment--thy bones
Will wither in a few years, and vanish so
That not the quickest eye could find a grain
Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.

The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
And no hand in the universe can turn
Thy hourglass, if these gummed leaves be burnt
Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps.
(1.107ff)

The poet claims a right to revelation exactly as does Manfred in the hall of Arimanes, on the special suffering of the poet. With humility, however, not Manfred's arrogance, the poet here needs Moneta (Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory, the mother of the Muses) to remind him of this: "None can usurp this height . . . / But those to whom the miseries of the world / Are misery, and will not let them rest," those who "feel the giant agony of the world" (1.147-57). Keats is slightly, very slightly, more empathetic to the pains of the world outside his own private heart than Byron, and he gives us two sorts among the saved: the first and most elevated are the humanitarians, the truly disinterested; the second are the poets, whose empathy causes them to suffer more than their sins deserve. They have "felt / What 'tis to die and live again before / [their] fated hour . . ." (1.141ff). In this, Keats would have them redeemed (though he modestly excludes himself).

Even Byron found useful the hopeful, wistful, Christian notion of suffering as cathartic, even redemptive. The picaresque heroes require that suffering touch them with sublimity--"the indistinctness of the suffering breast" (*Corsair*, Dec 1813, 1809)--that they might claim authority for their presumption. Manfred claims even more, asserts aggressively that suffering not only touches on the eternal, but earns the sufferer rights to commerce with the divine. In *Manfred*, the First Destiny sees by Manfred's "port / And presence here" that "his sufferings / Have been of an immortal nature--like / Our own" (II.iv.52-55). Manfred himself claims freedom on the basis of his suffering the poetic curse of the imagination, the Byronic curse of Cain. At the beginning of the poem, Manfred invokes the spirits by magic and incantation, and they do not come. He then taps the power earned from his suffering as one cursed with a rare and transcendent imagination (I.i.42-49ff), and they appear. Shelley attributes to Byron this ennoblement of the poet by his suffering, "quoting" him in "Julian and Maddalo": "Most wretched men / Are cradled into poetry by wrong, / They learn in suffering what they teach in song" (544-46). This is pain not redemptive, as

Wordsworth would have it, but a crucible of freedom of the will. Childe Harold, while also of this brimstone school of the imagination, does know one moment of the redemptive power of suffering, an occasion when he is brought to contemplative peace--"More placid seemed his eye, and smooth his pallid front"--when passing in the shadow of the promontory of Sappho's legendary suicide (II.li). Still, this approach, what Wordsworth credits Beaupuy with achieving ("Injuries / Made him more gracious" (*Prelude* 9.301-02), did not suit Byron's pessimistic skepticism. More often, suffering only proved the injustice of the tyrannous heavens (see chapter 6).

All symbols of eternity itself, those beyond the decay of time, are by definition and by convention those of the sublime. It is the voice of Nature telling of the eternal sea that the Wanderer in *The Excursion* hears in the shell held to his ear:

Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. (4.1144ff)

The Arab of the vision in *The Prelude* with book and shell holds two portals to the eternal (Wordsworth characteristically pairs representatives of eye and ear), the voice of the sea speaking even in the desert.

One persistent metaphor of these forces for Wordsworth is the constant conjunction in his work of stars and clouds. Stars already carry a weight of cultural and poetic symbolism which sees in them the celestial perfection, the music of the spheres and the divinity of the heavens. Wordsworth broadens this to include all that is implied by the eternal, most importantly, the universal soul. They are allied with the other symbols of the eternal physical dimensions of night and sky, as well as their own reputation for steadfastness in contrast with the inconstant moon. Clouds, on the other hand, are as exclusive of stars as transience of eternity. Clouds present the image of all that is beautiful but transient, affecting but fleeting. With flowers and, later, works of creative imagination, they allow transient things, though denied sublimity, to have beauty instead. Unlike the unity of the eternal, where stars are uniformly pure, crystalline, in a vast harmonious fabric, the temporal is by definition particular, discontinuous and disharmonious. Clouds, then, suggest much that is human: our individuality,

transience, changeableness, middle state between heaven and earth, and modest potential for sharing in the reflected beauty of it. The nearly inevitable conjunction of the two in Wordsworth's poetry as well as their incompatibility is made evident in their first appearance, in "An Evening Walk" (1788-89), where "low-hung clouds each star of summer hide" (260). It is significant that the two, consistently juxtaposed in the verses themselves, never share the same Wordsworthian sky. Mutually exclusive, like what they represent, either one or the other only will be visible. By contrast, symbols may merge with others on their own side of the divide; stars and bodies of water do ally: "Sweet are the sounds that mingle from afar, / Heard by calm lakes, as peeps the folding star . . ." (279-80). *The Excursion* ends with stars and clouds remaining unreconciled, relegated to their exclusive homes of day and night, with a scene of a sunset of clouds fading into a night of stars (9.759-65) reminiscent of the "Immortality Ode."

But these are only symbols of the eternal and the transient; the Romantics needed more than a recognition of eternal things, more than intimations of immortality. They struggled to experience and sustain a direct communion with the powers of this realm. As a young boy, Wordsworth tried to discourse with the owls, and in a moment of suspended will came just that revelation:

while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents. . . . (*Prelude* 5.407ff)

The force of this effect, and the clarity of the communication, impressed De Quincey: "This very expression, 'far', by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation."¹⁰¹ Shelley offers a similar moment in *Prometheus Unbound*, where Ione evokes heavenly "tones," "Aeolian modulations," which "pierce the sense, and live within the soul. . . ."

¹⁰¹ Jan-Apr 1839, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*; reprinted in *Reminiscences* 123.

In book two of *The Prelude*, the abbey ruins, "antique walls," of St. Mary's seem to sing with the voice of the wren, a temporal thing made eternal in that place, so that he wished to share in the transcendence out of time, to stay "for ever there / To hear such music" (134-35). The passage prepares him (us) for the more meaningful music of the flute heard across the lake (175ff), this actually bringing the revelation he sought, in a moment much like the episode with the owls. As he floats in a boat upon the water, he hangs suspended between three symbols of eternity: water, sky, and twilight, at the edge of each. Being mortal, he cannot cross the border into the immortal world, so at his greatest transport he exists spiritually on the edges of infinity, as he does on the borders of these sensual states, where the lake becomes sky, and the twilight sky becomes night. Keats describes just such a suspended moment, just such an uncrossable boundary in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (see chapter six). In Shelley, images of eternity meet, stars and the ocean, as they "pierce winter's crystal air / And gaze upon themselves within the sea" (*PU* IV.192-93). And the edenic isle in *Epipsychidion* sits "'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea, / Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity" like the morning star (457-57).

This revelation I have discussed above (chapter three); I only wish to emphasize the variety of manifestations of this synthesis and the contradictions which result. In *Wordsworth and Schelling*, E. D. Hirsch discusses a paradox of both English and German Romanticism. Romanticism, which he calls Enthusiasm:

denies the radical nature of time; there is no absolute separation between time and eternity. Just as in the case of all other oppositions, time and eternity interfuse. In fact, Enthusiasm has to hold this view of time in order to sustain the dynamic unity of opposites in all other realms, for, once the inexact nature of temporal flux is admitted, everything else falls into disconnection. The fusion that is striven for has to be *there* already, otherwise the moment of separation would be absolute; it would be gone, past recalling, never to be redeemed. Yet Enthusiasm has to accept movement through time, otherwise striving would have no meaning. All would be static perfection, eternal redemption. Temporality alone gives a meaning to striving and to life; nontemporality alone gives a meaning to the feeling of ever-present fulfillment and affirmation. Enthusiasm needs both time and eternity, and it needs them together. (62)

Wordsworth needs both clouds and stars, and must have them juxtaposed in immediate opposition, mutually exclusive though both are players in the moral process.

The intensely private nature of the Romantic hope, the loneliness of the individual soul plaintively seeking communion with the universe is implied, if not stated, in all of these moments. In part, this is a poet's own melancholic and solitary nature speaking; in part, revelation and salvation could only be purely personal experiences (the very point where religion and social morality part company). This may be felt with especial poignancy in "Mark the concentrated hazels that enclose" (1807). There we find a lone "Tomb" for a forgotten "Chieftain" (with the overtones of tragic fall this implies), among "lonely mountains," recorded for us by a solitary poet. It endures because "protected" from a changeful world by Nature (the enclosing trees). The tomb rests in an eddy of time, shielded from the transient "beams that play and glance" and the "rough wind." Thus, it opens onto things beyond itself, melding with eternity, which he suggests by calling the manmade object a "Stone" and by making the crypt of a single dead chieftain a place of future and plural powers: "a dark chamber where the Mighty sleep."

So the tyranny of time may be suspended by more means than just the permanence of natural objects, the certainty that stars will remain securely in their divinely-ordained spheres or Nature ever renew herself. Limited escape from time seems possible in the endurance of human objects of the past into the present; they serve as messengers from other, distant human hearts. But these past objects prove more than man's power temporarily to transcend time, to push past the limits of his own life. Conversely, they prove, in their own state of decay, the inevitable power of time over all things, and their contrast to their modern surroundings--the very fact that they are an anachronism--proves the power of time over man. This brings to the poet two sorts of benign effects: a moralizing balm the spirit feels in the intimations of eternity, and conversely, in the certainty of change, empirical evidence of the possibility of the progress of man and the endurance (although not immortality) of human effort. We have seen that both permanence and change coexist in Wordsworth's Nature, suggested by such phenomena as stars and clouds. In ancient ruins and the names of places,

Wordsworth draws upon the tradition of the sublime to find the same sort of dichotomy in the works of man.¹⁰²

One final reconciliation, ultimately the most important in his poetry, is the merging of flux and permanence in the eternal rebirth of cycles. The touchstone of his faith in this process, the great basis for hope, is in the certain and universal cycles of Nature. Although the Newtonian universe exists in huge cyclic flux, Wordsworth was happier leaving the heavens as the kingdom of stars and things unchanging; rather he looks to earthly things for the evidence of continuity amid change.

Abrams' great theme in *Natural Supernaturalism* is the Hegelian gyre of the Romantic vision, both cycle and progress, a movement from unity in innocence through dialectic circling back to a new found unity in experience (wisdom). As Schiller said: "the way back to Arcadia is closed forever, onward toward Elysium."¹⁰³ The circular structure of time and narrative in *The Prelude*, where the return also equals an advance, offers a paradigm of this in English Romanticism (as Hegel's own *Phenomenology of Mind* does in Germany) for much of Romantic and post-Romantic literature. Wordsworth offers us also a journey in *The Excursion* that circles back to the security of home, but a return at a higher level of wisdom. The whole physical structure of *The Excursion* is of a circular valley with the parish church at its center. Again, the metaphor implies a transcendence above time and space. The community's past (in the graveyard and the memory of the Pastor) and its future (in the registry book of weddings and baptisms) merges with the present in the community's heart and soul: the parish church. A unity beyond space is achieved as the Pastor stands in the churchyard pointing out the homes, as presumably the individuals of the community can look from their homes upon the church. In this simple way do separate beings become

¹⁰²In an article to be published separately, I discuss the divine overwatch of the eternal in the brooding maternal presence of ancient ruins. In Wordsworth, ruins are lurking proximate to every major spot-of-time revelation, either physically to the character or narratively in the verse. Gravestones, epitaphs, inscriptions and the names of places work similarly, with lesser power, but more importantly as proofs of the power of the allied voice of man and Nature.

¹⁰³*On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* 542; qtd. in Abrams 215.

a social unity and in that unity approach a humble, earthly transcendence.

As utopian visions in mature Romanticism are approachable only through individual revelation, however, we must always return to the individual mind. Abrams well illuminates the grand cycle of the mind's development and its revelatory grasp of eddying time. I am principally interested, however, in moral epistemology, in the smaller cycles of Nature as impressions or intimations of immortality.

Nature's renewals on the grand scale are evident in the circling and phasing moon, the returning day, or the seasonal cycles, and implicit in the evaporation and precipitation of water or the continuity of a forest. From these separate instances from sublime Nature, Wordsworth might well have derived the cyclical character of the whole of Nature, and from that, accept the natural (or divine) authority of death and rebirth as necessary, right, and universal. But he took little comfort in this. Rather, he prefers to dwell on the power of cycles for the transcendence of mortal things. Just as he needed to identify the nature and powers of the sublime with constant things, so does he need to create a dichotomy by giving the small and beautiful over to cycles. This strict exclusiveness causes odd bedfellows: tiny delicate stars join with mountains and the sea in sublimity, while mankind and the march of history league with flowers among the things cyclical. All remain eternal in their way however; the sublime are unchanging, the beautiful ever-renewed. While the object of our devotion must ever lie in the sublime, in things above insistent, tempestuous time, the moral lesson often awaits us in humble beings, those buffeted as we in its blasts. One such is the small flower, clinging to the brutal hillside, at risk from foot and stream, whose very fragility gives it credibility when it speaks to us of eternity through rebirth. Here is something on a human scale, something even more ephemeral than us that nonetheless manages to bridge transient and eternal worlds.¹⁰⁴ In reaching for a metaphor to express mutability transcending time, Schelling also chose the flower:

¹⁰⁴E.g. "The Tuft of Primroses" (1808), "The Small Celandine" (1803-04), and "To the Daisy ('Sweet Flower!')."

"The flower of eternity unfolds in the temporal."¹⁰⁵

Young Wordsworth sought what ways he could to incorporate man into the cycles of Nature or find what in his own cycles could bring him to intimations of eternity. Immortality itself was beyond earthy man, as was, in the mature poems, even direct communication with eternity. Many of his greatest poems are celebrations of those worldly things that have achieved immortality in endless rebirth or are puzzled and dissatisfied grapplings with what makes the same thing possible or impossible in man. "Tintern Abbey" is just such an appeal to circling time. The four occurrences of "again" in the opening stanza establish the subject of continuance through the rebirth of memory. But if memory (like Nature) is cyclical, the self, one man's consciousness, undeniably is linear and this disparity in part generates the narrator's frustration. This disparity makes both desirable and difficult the retention of a child's receptivity in our adult life. Against the cyclical permanence of Nature in the opening section he contrasts the irrevocable decay of man in the second half of the poem (83ff), the harmony of Nature, "a body of permanent forms held together within a structure of permanent relationships" (Grob 16-17) against his own growing estrangement from this system.

V.A.2 Neo-Platonism and the Intellectual Philosophy

Much has been said on Romantic Neo-Platonism, and I only wish to observe that each of these Romantics, with the exception of Byron, struggled to demonstrate the Necessity of that vaguely Neo-Platonic moral agenda which Keats described as "to school an Intelligence" in a "World of Pains and troubles" and "make it a soul. . . ."¹⁰⁶

Although Keats and Byron are among the least Neo-Platonic of the Romantics, Keats' "intelligence without identity" and Byron's "Mind" (which he equated with "soul" in an Enlightenment way) both refer to consciousness, neither

¹⁰⁵ *Werke* 2: 377; qtd. in Hirsch 77.

¹⁰⁶ Ltr. to George and Georgiana, 28 Apr 1819.

allowing any Christian or Gnostic interpretations, but both still hoping for some immortality for this consciousness.¹⁰⁷ I wish to stress that the Neo-Platonism of *Childe Harold* III, and other works of those moralizing months after exile, are not especially true to Byron. He was living again "not in myself" but becoming a "Portion of that around me" (*CH* III.lxxii) in the sense that he was vulnerable to the particular emotional distress of that spring of 1816 and in Shelley to sharper thinking and a stronger will than his own.

It took the imagination and boldness of Goethe to offer at least a vision of Neo-Platonic unity actually achieved, even if only in allegory. In the Festival at the Aegean Sea (in *Faust* 2: II), Homunculus succeeds where all the mortals failed, he actually merges with, dissipates himself into the sea. Faust, like Shelley and Keats, sought union with eternity through eternal, classical beauty (in his case, the reincarnate Helen), but he remains material, she mercurial. (Their attempted synthesis, Euphorion, who stands for poetry--and Byron as its purest expression in "act"--also is destroyed. Attempting the flight of poetic imagination but weighed down by his corporeality, he crashes and dies.) Significantly, Homunculus succeeds in achieving unity, like Endymion, by seeking his antithesis: corporeality. He had wanted physical, temporal existence, the full dialectic of the senses, pleasure and pain, that is life. So, ultimately, he also failed to cross the Cartesian chasm. The difference remains, however, that being pure spirit, already on the immortal side, he returns to glory, while man, on the suffering side, returns only to dust.

Though the great spokesman for Necessity among the Romantics was Shelley, there is nothing I can add to discussions of his Intellectual Philosophy in commentators such as James Notopoulos (*The Platonism of Shelley*) and Earl Wasserman (*Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound,"* and chapter two of *Shelley: A Critical Reading*.)

There is Necessity in cycles in Shelley, where he sought comfort in a place where Wordsworth already knew it was not to be found. He believed in the

¹⁰⁷See "Detached Thoughts," 1821-22, no. 98.

Necessity of the immanent principles of things, not as much in Coleridgean organicism as in Spinozist substance, the "vegetative power" of plants and the "stony power" of stones.¹⁰⁸ But it grows toward the more moral "active Principle" of Wordsworth (*Excursion* 9: 1-11). He approached a Hegelian idealism in giving historical power to the Necessity of accumulating thoughts. This takes thought out of time (see *Hellas* 795), even destroying time, like Parmenides.¹⁰⁹ Thoughts detached from individual minds merge into the Neo-Platonic sea, as we have seen, and they gather like snow flakes, gradually gaining the weight of Necessity.¹¹⁰

All of the Intellectual Philosophy gathers in a single massive metaphor in "Mont Blanc" (Jul 1816). The Absolute, Being, towers pure, remote, and eternal, sending its river of Necessity thundering through the vale of Existence, sublimely "dark, deep . . . many-coloured, many-voiced." Necessity roars through Existence not as the Absolute, but "Power" only "in likeness," for, again, the Absolute itself has no parts, does not move, is beyond thought much less expression. As Demogorgon cannot even touch its great Cause with words--"He reigns"--so the Arve descends as only a reflection of what it is. In the Intellectual Philosophy, Existence, the "everlasting universe of things" exists exterior to the human mind, but still it "Flows through the mind," half perceived and half created, as Wordsworth had said.

¹⁰⁸See Spinoza, *Ethics* I: prop. 17, "Scholium"; *Opera* 2: 62.

¹⁰⁹See *PU* II.iv.9-11, *Hellas* 745, 801-06, and *QM* 3.100.

¹¹⁰E.g. in "Mont Blanc" and *PU* II.iii.36-42.

V.B The Process of Revelation

I identify three major aspects of the way in which moral unity actually is approached: by the urgings (even the powers) of the head and heart (Reason and Conscience), by the passiveness of the will, and by the autonomous power of the creative imagination.

V.B.1 Innate Voices: Reason and Conscience (Head and Heart)

As in *Lamia*, when Keats seems to advocate a mutual role for head and heart, when we presume that he had settled on a doctrine of a productive dialectic of these two complementary forces, he does not let us rest easily. Maturity will bring with it a growing dominance of the intellect. This is another way of looking at Wordsworthian separateness, of dulling maturity, and Keats typically adopts the position that if it must come, then it must be accepted into the vision of earthly revelation. Still, if morality is to lie in the heart, then the intellect seems to interfere, and he admits to Reynolds: "when we come to human Life and the affections, it is impossible to know how a parallel of breast and head can be drawn. . . ." Ultimately, the rational mind does turn out to be a wolf in the fold of revelation.

To ensure the Necessity as well as the universality of morality, secular moralists perceived the need for virtuous impressions to be acquired even in situations where the external images themselves may not be enough (e.g. in cities). There has to be a moral predisposition in many cases for any perception of virtue to be possible. So most Romantics came to believe in a moral sense.¹¹¹ The same need applied to hopes for reform; the most corrupted must be reachable at some moral core. Shelley often appeals to this universal innate morality, "the common

¹¹¹E.g. in Wordsworth, "Michael" (144-45), "The Old Cumberland Beggar," *Prelude* 1.383-90 and 12.279-81, and Peter Bell's conversion.

sympathies of every *human* breast."¹¹² Keats shared this belief, quoting Wordsworth's "The Old Cumberland Beggar"--"We all have one human heart"--with approval.¹¹³ Of course, this "moral sense" is the child's Neo-Platonic soul, still unified, the expression of a soul which seeks its home in eternal things,¹¹⁴ and all but Byron tried to demonstrate a Necessity in it.

Secular dreams built on an empirical base soon darken, and Demogorgon's closing address in *Prometheus Unbound* and the Wanderer's lament in *The Excursion* (4.205ff) tell a more sober story. And whereas Locke had established a new universal, individualist, epistemological Eden, where every new child had the chance not to fall (see Abrams 52), Coleridge and Byron were too marked by Calvinism ever to doubt man's innate corruption. Both held to a moral sense of sorts, but Byron allowed no Necessity and Coleridge only one highly conditional. For both, natural man is fallen man, the slave of "the rank vapours that steam up from the corrupt *Heart*" (i.e. the passions). For Coleridge, Christianity exists to "cleans[e] the *Heart*," its proper role being the moral guide.¹¹⁵ Moral sense is denied in the mechanical sense of Shaftesbury, which distances God, but a "Moral Nature," that benign construction of man by Providence, is affirmed. And the heart, when cleansed, when attuned to the divine and universal, joins the universal heart in sympathetic, harmonious moral desires: "There is one heart for the whole mighty mass of Humanity, and every pulse in each particular vessel strives to beat in concert with it."¹¹⁶ Few, the elect recipients of "God's gracious Providence" (98), even approach this harmony, but conscience tugs all men toward it.

Christianity requires intentionalism, because culpability cannot be established

¹¹²E.g. "Julian and Maddalo" 226ff, "The Mask of Anarchy" 340ff, and numerous incidents in *The Revolt of Islam*. In Coleridge, we find the case of the mutineers in *Friend*, no. 7, 28 Sept 1809; *Works* 4: 2.100-01.

¹¹³Ltr. to George and Georgiana, 19 Mar 1819.

¹¹⁴E.g. "Anecdote for Fathers," "We are Seven," "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," *Prelude* 1.305, and Shelley's *Queen Mab* 9.114-15, 124-25.

¹¹⁵"Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion," no. 4, *Aids* 183-84.

¹¹⁶*Friend*, 1818, 1: 13; *Works* 4: 1.97.

without it. The great tasks of both Milton and Dante were to anchor morality and justice in intention, or to look at it from the other side, to justify the apparent injustice of an intentionalist ethics under an omnipotent and omniscient God. Nothing mattered in Christian theology as much as this, and Dante places the question of culpability directly in the center of his *Commedia* (a book of intricate numerical symbolism), in the middle three cantos of the middle book of the triad. The ascent of man to salvation hinges on his acceptance of culpability, not for his actions but for his intentions, what was in his heart.

Intention meant the human will, which Coleridge and Kant recognized as "the inward motives and impulses which constitute the Essence of Morality. . . ." ¹¹⁷ Prudential considerations aside, a moral philosophy cannot take consequences into foremost account. The basis must be of mind and will only, of an act not an effect. Morality must arise from universal and necessary principles, principles which Coleridge insisted must be organic, inseparable from the being, not taught: "the fig-tree may bring forth it's own fruit from it's own living principle, and not have the figs tied on to it's barren sprays by the hand of outward Prudence. . . ." ¹¹⁸ All of the Romantic poets, whatever their antipathy to Christianity, accepted the basis of morality in intention. The narrator of *The Fall of Hyperion* shows an intention to feed the sacrificial fire, which Moneta accepts as sufficient for morality, rewarding his "good will" (1.242) with "scenes" telling of morality, mutability, and Necessity.

To contemporary Christian ethics, a beneficent God had graced man with two guides to serve his free will: Conscience and Right Reason (revelation). Both are powers through which man attends to the divine morality within him. Conscience regulates and justifies intention. A man would feel the weight of conscience (feel guilty) only to the extent that his intent was flawed, and have a clear conscience to the extent that he honestly meant well. Conscience, then, is the knowledge of good and evil, that which presumed to make Apollo divine. It is not feeling; it speaks of moral duty, not of sentiment. It is the *a priori* moral law; for the

¹¹⁷ *Friend*, no. 23, 8 Feb 1810; *Works* 4: 1.314.

¹¹⁸ Ltr. to Tho. Smith, 22 Jun 1809.

individual it exists as the direct perception of divine purpose. From a basis in individual morality it becomes the means toward the moral society (as in Rousseau and religion), leading to a socialism of "the common Children of one great Family, working toward the same aim by Reason even as the Bees in their hives by Instinct. . . ."¹¹⁹ The subtle distinction between conscience and reason Coleridge carefully maintains: conscience is contained within the scope and operations of reason, and is only the dimension of reason to do with the impulse to moral action.¹²⁰ "By the pure Reason, I mean the Power by which we become possessed of Principle . . . the ideas of . . . Justice, Holiness, Free-Will, &c. in Morals."¹²¹ This, in Kantian terms, is where freewill reconciles with Necessity, that is, in moral duty.¹²² Reason gives "to every rational Being the right of acting as a free agent, and of finally determining his conduct by his own Will, according to his own Conscience . . ." (125). Revelatory reason Coleridge worshipped as the very word of God, and freewill he affirmed as its very principle, as in Dante, precisely so that culpability may be assigned. This is the highest expression of freewill and the sublimest morality: "What the plant is by an act not its own and unconsciously--that thou must make thyself become."¹²³

V.B.2 Wise Passiveness

Whatever its source, the divine message requires suppression of the will:

I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.
("Expostulation and Reply," 1798)

¹¹⁹*Friend* no. 1, 1 Jun 1809; *Works* 4: 2.12. Coleridge elsewhere defends freewill on the basis that the alternative to it would be instinct. Necessity is intolerable when mechanical but the highest virtue when divine, the difference being not compulsion but the intention--life or organic purpose--which compels.

¹²⁰See *Friend*, no. 22, 25 Jan 1810; *Works* 4: 2.295.

¹²¹*Friend*, no. 7, 28 Sept 1809; *Works* 4: 2.104n.

¹²²See also *Friend*, 1818, 1: 5; *Works* 4: 1.157-58; and 3: 2.11; *Works* 4: 1.514-15.

¹²³"On Poesy or Art"; in *BL* 1: lxxxii.

The quintessence of Wordsworth's position on passivity, on the suppression of the will, is found in the account of his youthful 'conversations' with owls in "There was a boy" (1798, reprinted in *Prelude* 5.389ff). So long as the boy only imposes his will on the night, through his dominating voice (where shouting necessarily excludes hearing), no value is gained; there is no moral lesson. But "while he hung / Listening," then "into his heart" and "into his mind" came the voice of Nature, with "all its solemn imagery." The moral Necessity is there, but it acts only on a mind whose will is passive.¹²⁴

In Keats, Wordsworthian wise passiveness becomes "Negative Capability" (in the moral sphere at least).¹²⁵ The wind through a field of grain which he delights in is the great Wordsworthian sublime,¹²⁶ Shelley's Necessity as the West Wind. Wordsworth's daffodils sing the same aeolian tune, giving voice to that which "rolls through all things," the sublime infusing the beautiful. The central Romantic question of how man may be open to, commune with, or participate in this power, Keats answers much like Wordsworth, both touched with Christianity. Keats comments wryly on his friend, the Godwinian rationalist, "Dilke will never come at a truth as long as he lives, because he is always trying at it. He is a Godwin Methodist."¹²⁷ He advises Reynolds: "let us open our leaves like a flower, and be passive and receptive; budding gently under the eyes of Apollo. . . ."¹²⁸ In Shelley's *Epipsychidion*, the Narrator "sprang" actively in pursuit of transcendence, as in *Alastor* and *Endymion*, but failed. The active approach

¹²⁴Examples abound in Wordsworth, e.g. *Prelude*, 1799, 1.94-95. For a moment quite similar to "There was a Boy," see *Prelude* 2.168ff. In "To a Butterfly" (1802), the futility of the will pursuing transcendence he compares to "leaps and springs" after a butterfly (i.e. psyche or soul). See also the empiricists of "Star-gazers" (1806) and *Faust* 1.2567ff.

¹²⁵The best explanation of Negative Capability is Keats' own in a letter to his brothers of 22 Dec 1817.

¹²⁶*Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp; qtd. in Lowell I: 96-97.

¹²⁷Ltr. to George and Georgiana, 24 Sept 1819.

¹²⁸Ltr., 19 Feb 1818. See also Keats' echo of Wordsworth's unquestioning lark and blackbird in his "What the Thrush Said." Of course, Keats himself pursued, challenged, and asserted his will, for this was his nature. He would impatiently "strive to think divinely; / That I should never hear Apollo's song," he confessed ("To My Brother George"). *Endymion* arose as apt self-admonishment.

cannot be allowed to succeed, lest the divine be shown plastic to human influences. Instead, "The Vision I had sought" (322) comes to him when he is quiet, in the quiescence of failure, as it does ^{to} Endymion. In "Ode to the West Wind" (1819) he admits the error of having "striven" in his youth (as Wordsworth does in *The Prelude*) and prays to be carried as a passive instrument of a higher purpose: "Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" (51, 53). He reacted much as did Keats amid the blowing grain: "Sudden, thy shadow fell on me; / I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!" ("Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," 59-60).

All of these poets came to recognize that passiveness does not mean inaction, but is "wise," requiring attention, concentration, and, most of all, receptivity. Nor does a passive human will, one that attends but does not strive, presuppose an active divinity. Clearly a motion occurs in revelation, power brings to harmony what had been separate. In "There was a Boy," this confluence of things brings a unity where each player adopts characteristics from the others: the stars come to earth to move horizontally "along the edges of the hills;" the boy, of the earth, "stands," his verticality empathized; the boy hoots and the owls "shout;" the solemn imagery moved into the boy's heart and mind as well as into the "bosom of the steady lake" as if all were the same motion. But even here, the universal will is not itself active, although it is spoken of in terms suggesting this. Rather, when both wills are passive, perception of external objects happens through some natural or mechanical means, necessarily. It is only then that the one truly active party here, the imagination, works in the mind to form the image and interpret the moral lesson.¹²⁹ There is little suggestion of external agency in the intercourse itself, rarely an active ministry of natural or divine will,¹³⁰ but a straightforward mechanical, perceptual event. Only within the mind does an autonomous agent become involved, where the imagination begins the associative process to assemble these powerful impressions into ideas and ultimately the structure of a moral character.¹³¹ Wordsworth struggles in his early years toward this distinction

¹²⁹See De Quincey quoting Wordsworth in *Reminiscences* 112.

¹³⁰but for the boat-stealing and nest-robbing episodes of the 1799 *Prelude*, and even here not unambiguously.

¹³¹The Preface to Wordsworth's *Poems* (1815) describes this same process.

of the separate active and passive activities of mind (e.g. 1799 *Prelude*), and it is with difficulty that he avoids idealism on the one hand and sensationalism on the other. And by the time a balance is won ("Tintern Abbey"), mind and Nature begin to slip into each other, losing their identity (which he, the individualist, wished to maintain) to the aggressive, expansionist (Coleridgean) imagination.

In Coleridge a complete concept of the passive or compliant will emerges, one closest to Dante's Paradise of souls beaming with God's light. Coleridge expresses the presence of the divine will in man most clearly through the act of blessing. Man, by the total giving of his heart, the act of fullest forfeiture of self-interest, participates in an act of blessing. Only in his purest state may man hope to become a conduit to this divine power. It brings us to the extremity of full Wordsworthian "wise passiveness," where the will is totally in harmony with the divine will and the goodness of God flows through the soul of the blessed unimpeded. In this way does Coleridge bless "the last rook" beating its "straight path . . . Homewards" in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797), and the Ancient Mariner (1798) redeems his own guilt in the blessing of the lowly sea-snakes.¹³²

Shelley's theology typically exceeded even Coleridge in its metaphysics. In *The Revolt of Islam*, Cythna "taught" the Narrator in a manner "Unconscious of the power through which she wrought / The woof of such intelligible thought" (2.34) that is, she wove the power into words and meaning, but the power came from above, or beyond, through her mind as in "Mont Blanc." The great image here is that of the aeolian harp, where the imagination of the poet awaits the breeze of the divine immanent truth: "I wait thy breath, Great Parent . . ." (Alastor 45). "The blasts of Autumn drive the wing'd seeds," Shelley tells us, infusing the West Wind with organic power (*R of I* 9.21). A few stanzas later, "The seeds are sleeping in the soil," but the point remains of Necessity, like the coming hour for Prometheus, the waiting avalanche in "Mont Blanc," like Demogorgon himself, dozing under the earth. "Ripeness is all," and passiveness

¹³²Each creature represents a species held in low esteem, a species allied to sin and evil in popular conception, and for this reason, the blessing becomes even more Christlike, blessing "even the least of these."

the only strategy. "'Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven, / Surround the world.--We are their chosen slaves" (*R of I* 9.23).

V.B.3 The Teleological Imagination

Keats needed to mollify no jealous God, but needed a divine creative power toward which a poet might be negatively capable. He let the imagination flower into its own divinity, and was able to do so only because he rarely concerned himself with such questions of moral authority as bedeviled Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Byron, and which help define a proper religion or deity.

The imagination as escape from physical Necessity raised Coleridge, Wordsworth (through Coleridge), and Shelley from the pit of moral vacancy (see chapter three). As an ascent to revelation, however, as an autonomous, egoistic power with divine aspirations, the imagination in Shelley and Keats achieved a potency and a discipleship exceeding its pretensions in Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Like Byron, Keats looked to earthly things, things of the senses, as the first step toward revelation. And in every major poem of his, the same pattern emerges. A ritualistic three-step ascension is demanded of us: feast (fulfillment), sleep, and a reawakening to revelation. This progression is familiar. It is the great seasons of Nature; life, death, and resurrection; sin, purging of sin, and rebirth in faith; and thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.¹³³

Feasts in Keats are sensual: gastronomic, sexual, or emotional (of joy, melancholy, or despair). "That full draught is parent to my theme."¹³⁴ Feast leads by Necessity to satiety, where fullness passes over to numbness, its antithesis. This is the "Cave of Quietude" of *Endymion* (4.448), the sensual, swollen stasis of

¹³³I have written an article, submitted for publication, that discourses in some detail these stages to revelation in Keats. See also the discussions in Aileen Ward (143) and Abrams (127).

¹³⁴*The Fall of Hyperion* 1.46. See also "The Eve of St. Agnes," stanza 30, *Hyperion* ("The ripe hour came") 2.174, and Keats' ltr. to Taylor, 27 Feb 1818.

"To Autumn," the shrine of Melancholy, the nepenthe of *The Triumph of Life*.¹³⁵ Shelley asks "Does the dark gate of death / conduct to thy mysterious paradise, / O Sleep?" (*Alastor* 211-13), a hope implied in the lines which open *Queen Mab* and *The Demon of the World*: "How wonderful is Death / Death and his brother Sleep!" With death/sleep comes awakening to revelation (or a dream) out of deepest willessness.¹³⁶ The revelation should be the freshness of renewed receptivity of Wordsworth's hopes, the direct illumination of God's light in Dante, the joy out of perfect expression of inner principle in Coleridge.¹³⁷

V.C The Moral Duty

Moral Duty, as organic Necessity, is the final goal of moral epistemology and development. Its nature, characteristics, and philosophical details have been exhaustively studied, however, under Christian and Kantian explications of Romanticism.¹³⁸

A fundamental paradox has passed from the classical age through Christianity to Rousseau and the Romantics. Speaking of civil law, Cicero asserts: "Omnes servi sumus, ut liberi esse possimus."¹³⁹ Coleridge uses the same words in

¹³⁵E.g. *Hyperion* 2.175; *Endymion* 1.823, 2.823-24, and 4.512ff; "Ode on Melancholy"; James Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* (1748), an influence both on Keats and Wordsworth; and Caldwell 166.

¹³⁶Examples in Shelley when triumph arises out of hopelessness, as in *Endymion*, include *PU* 819-20, *Hellas* when the Greeks are in total rout, and *R of I* on several occasions.

¹³⁷E.g. *The Triumph of Life* 41ff; Keats' ltr. to Bailey, 22 Nov 1817; "On Death"; "Sleep and Poetry," which asserts boldly in its very title the step from sleep to revelation; the subtitle of *The Fall of Hyperion*, "A Dream"; all of the great odes of 1819, especially the "Ode to Psyche" (Apr 1819), which opens in a moment etched of tenuous revelation out of senselessness; *Endymion* 1.691-94, 4.637-38, and 4.974-75; *Hyperion* 2.294, 3.61-63, and 86-91; "To My Brother George" 43-46; *Lamia* 2.305ff; and *The Fall of Hyperion* 1.1-18, and 122ff. And we find it in *Faust* 2: 4694.

¹³⁸See especially Orsini's *Coleridge and German Idealism*.

¹³⁹"We are slaves to the law that we may be free" (*Pro Cluentio* 53.146).

speaking of divine immanent law: "to be free is to be governed by Laws. . . ." ¹⁴⁰ Shelley approached it with true religious devotion, merging powers of external causation with inner springs of Love to wrap man in "that sweet bondage which is Freedom's self" (*QM* 9.76). Shelley's necessitarian idolatry always tended along a morally secure track. Throughout his career it anchored the moral order, defining freedom in terms of order and purpose, opposing it to chaos and anarchy. ¹⁴¹

Dante, Milton, and Coleridge each responded to turbulent times by reminding people to surrender their apparent freedom to earn the real freedom of the moral will. ¹⁴² As Grean explains of Shaftesbury: "since God wills the good of man, [to act against his will] is to act contrary to one's own interests." And this is to curtail one's own freedom: "Restraint and self-mastery are not contradictions of freedom, but the very conditions of it" (90-91). Plato, St. Augustine, Aquinas, and Spinoza all defined freedom in these terms, as a liberty in obedience. It is both a freedom to act according to our natural impulses and (especially for the Christians) a freedom from acting contrary to our moral natures. Coleridge asserts of religion: "her service being indeed perfect Freedom," ¹⁴³ and Wordsworth shared the view that "this alone is genuine liberty" (*Prelude* 120-22).

The innocent soul, then, (as Luther had said) is a compliant horse able only to choose its riders, to be either other or self-determined. Coleridge makes his great statement of the conscience precisely so: "all the Choice, which is permitted to me, consists in having it for my Guardian Angel or my avenging Fiend!" This describes the situation in "Ancient Mariner," the two acts of will (not even choice) and the Necessities of evil and of good which followed. Freewill, choice, lay only in those moments (perhaps the one single moment) when we decide to follow the discipline of virtue or the slavery of evil. Morality was based on

¹⁴⁰ *Friend* no. 10, 19 Oct 1809; *Works* 4: 2.135.

¹⁴¹ E.g. *Hellas* 46ff and "The Mask of Anarchy."

¹⁴² See *Purgatorio* 1.71, 5.27-30, and 27.130-43; *Comus* 671ff and 1028-29; and *PL* 12.402-04 and 6.174-81.

¹⁴³ From the Book of Common Prayer, reproduced in *Conciones ad Populum*, *Works* 1: 30.

culpability and culpability on freewill. This is why freewill was the "*grand postulate*" of *The Friend*. But in our lives no more choice than a single moment of the will, with perhaps some vague potential for reform, is needed.

Instead of external prohibitions, Coleridge bases morality on "the laws and constitution of the mind itself" (Aphorism 109c, 26). All that is external is impotent, for in no case "is our conviction derived, or capable of receiving any addition, from outward experience, or *empirical* data. . . ." ¹⁴⁴ Duty, the "act" the inner moral law demands from us, precedes knowledge and being *a priori* is necessary (its impulse, not its continuance through the will to the act). If freewill were defined as uninfluenced or undetermined choice (by analytical reason), then any impulsion to action that preceded knowledge could not be free, but must be Necessity. But if freewill was defined to include all will arising from formative and irreducible moral principles, then conflict with Necessity vanishes. The very definition of "duty" itself tells of a synthesis of freewill and Necessity. A duty is a law or compulsion which does not allow for compromise or avoidance yet implies the need for compliance by a chosen act, a willful obedience.

I need not rehearse Coleridge's employment of Kant in defining freewill as acting according to self-determination in the practical reason. Muirhead has been the father of many works on this subject. Orsini summarizes Coleridge's departure:

Coleridge reverses Kant's argument on the freedom of the will in connection with the moral law. For Kant, we have first the moral law as an absolute certainty [necessary to the existence of morality], and from that we deduce, as its presupposition, the freedom of the will: "we ought, therefore we can." But Coleridge here starts from the "good will" as the primary certainty [necessary from divine benevolence], and from that he deduces the law of morality. (158)

Coleridge had to assume a teleology (Providence) behind morality. For Kant, duty comes from the dictates of reason, for Coleridge it comes from the heart.

¹⁴⁴In this, we see denigrated such external teleologies as Wordsworth's *Nature* and better understand the influence of young Coleridge, a fervent organicist, in dragging Wordsworth past the activist *Nature* of the 1799 *Prelude* to the uncertain quasi-idealist and touter of the imagination we find in the 1805 *Prelude* and later.

Naturally, then, that Kant and Christianity should share the same duty (no accident, considering Kant's pietism) held great appeal to Coleridge, and he expresses his own version of Kant's Supreme Moral Principle, which manages to synthesize the two.¹⁴⁵

This duty, as I have hoped to make clear, opposes the sort of inner Necessity of passions Byron recognized: "who can view the ripened rose, nor seek / To wear it? . . . Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold . . . nor climb?" No two poets more closely shared the curse of an unruly inner nature than Byron and Coleridge, yet hardly more different could have been their respective solutions. Young Coleridge at least, still holding the shards of Enlightenment hope for progress, had to allow Kant his severity, and despite his own insistence on the importance of the virtuous affections, could not but confirm duty in terms as severe as Kant or Godwin.¹⁴⁶ This leads to a particular and serious moral consequence for Coleridge, an ideological extremism that recalls the moral repugnance at religious intolerance that helped give birth to the very Enlightenment from which Coleridge was trying to break free. I offer a discussion of this in Appendix Two.

For neither Wordsworth, Coleridge, nor Shelley, in their mature thought, does it make sense to speak of being obedient to duty, to the the divine will. There is but one will; the will of the moral individual is the will of God focused through the transparent heart. Yet Wordsworth leaned somewhat toward Keats and Byron in never being quite happy with this apparent surrender of individual autonomy. Men may be "led" or "conducted" by a higher powers, surrendering the motive prerogative, humble and passive before the eternal, but he would have them retain the independent self. His streak of northcountry self-reliance left him with a stream of Necessity sporting and splashing restlessly against the very stream banks and gravity that defined it. In "Ode to Duty" (1804) we find a Coleridgean "duty": "Flowers laugh before thee in their beds . . . Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong . . ." (53-55). This is the will of a Christian God, though one not

¹⁴⁵In *Notes* 2: no. 3231.

¹⁴⁶See *Notes* 2: no. 2556, Apr 1805.

entirely pruned of pantheism or natural Necessity. But a defense of the autonomous will broke out in this very poem in a suppressed stanza I have quoted above.¹⁴⁷ Still, liberty of obedience finds growing acceptance in an aging Wordsworth, where happiness exists and "liberty is there" for those who "never heard / Of a command which they have power to break, / Or rule which they are tempted to transgress . . ." (*Excursion* 4.376-80).

Love is the supreme example of moral duty. The impulsive passion of Love itself does not suggest choice, but understood as moral duty, it becomes a matter for the will.¹⁴⁸ As "religious" duty, Love supersedes materialist Necessity with the substitution of a higher moral Necessity.¹⁴⁹ Demogorgon reminds us that Love must be the ruling power in a moral world, on "its awful throne of patient power / In the wise heart."¹⁵⁰ Yet it includes the simple and private morals of the solitary heart, such as the synthesis of freedom and Necessity that Keats found in art.¹⁵¹ Love finds its highest Necessity in Shelley, more inclined than Wordsworth to see it as that universal order which "doth preserve the stars from wrong."¹⁵² This is also the Christian Love Paul flings into the ether in First Corinthians 13 made Neo-Platonic, mystical transcendentalism.¹⁵³ It is the union of Homunculus, the pure primeval spirit of Love in unity with the One Mind (Life), merging with the great Neo-Platonic symbol of the ocean (*Faust* 2: II), the birthplace of life in Goethe's evolutionary speculations: "So herrsche denn Eros, der alles begonnen!"¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷"Denial and restraint I prize / No farther than they breed a second Will more wise."

¹⁴⁸See Coleridge, "Reflections respecting Morality", *Aids* 55-56).

¹⁴⁹Agathon makes this point in *The Symposium* (48).

¹⁵⁰*PU* IV.554ff, a phase uniting Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" and Keats' "thinking hearts." It requires, of course, a quiescent will in order to rule.

¹⁵¹This is classical more than Romantic. In the sixth of his *Letters on Atheistic Education*, Schiller wrought the aesthetic delight in "beauty" out of its "harmony of laws" (qtd. in Abrams 212).

¹⁵²See "The Coliseum, and the discussion in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 294.

¹⁵³See also *PU* II.ii.92-93 and iv.118-20.

¹⁵⁴"May Eros then reign who engendered it all!" 2: II.8479.

Byron, a closet Stoic, based his ethics on disinterestedness, and his uses of Love aspire to make disinterestedness nearly transcendent. Even before meeting Shelley, he had elevated Love to an ether nearly indistinguishable from its Platonic or Shelleyan form. Such a Love Cain finds at the apex of the universe (*Cain* II.ii.321-22) and it takes the lovers on *The Island* out of time and causality (II.xv.347). *Heaven and Earth* explores Love as the bridge between heaven and earth, in very obvious allegorical terms. The spiritual emphasis here seems Shelleyan, as Diotima tells Socrates that Love "interprets between gods and men, conveying to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them . . ." (*Symposium* 54). Love as the agent of spiritual revelation recalls *A Defense of Poetry* and "The Sensitive Plant," the poet as bringer of law and synthesis. Love as earthly redemption appears in Byron from the beginning, however, although poetic cliché preceded emotional truth.¹⁵⁵ The redemptive Love Faust scorned but found, Byron makes central to all of his major works.¹⁵⁶ Keats would unify Love in this life, as a higher synthesis of pleasure and pain, creeping up obliquely on transcendence, while Byron, separateness accepted, leaves them asunder.¹⁵⁷ Shelley's essay, "On Love," prefigures the moral redemption of *The Island*, where the yearning self seeks to draw "a circle around its proper paradise which pain and sorrow and evil dare not overleap" (a distinction between Platonic Shelley and pragmatic Keats), a fulfillment which is "the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends" (Fleck 174). And Byron does not snatch it away in the final lines; Love finds its kingdom on *The Island*.¹⁵⁸ Earthly Love is indeed "all we know of Heaven below" (and Keats, after the 1819 odes, would have agreed). Byron's own disinterested Love ("The other better self, whose joy or woe / Is more than ours") joins with Keatsian fullness in a Neo-Platonic synthesis of two hearts "Wrapt in one blaze" in a

¹⁵⁵E.g. "And Thou Art Dead, as Young and Fair," Feb 1812, and *CH* II.lxxxii.

¹⁵⁶"Stanzas (Could Love for ever)" especially takes a Faustian view of the moment of pure sensual fulfillment out of time.

¹⁵⁷See *Sardanapalus* V.i.21-22. He would always affirm man's ever-repeating expulsion from Eden.

¹⁵⁸II.xvi.370ff, unlike *The Corsair*; see the final scene and final line.

redemptive death ("the pure . . . yet funeral pile").

"Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the mortal world" Shelley announces (Preface to *R of I*). The "sole law" must also be the sole hope for man, the only possible redemption. It follows that we should "feel / Most vain all hope but love. . . ." ¹⁵⁹ It proves the key to redemption for Prometheus. ¹⁶⁰ It alone promises the millennium. Earth feels her own rebirth in Spring from the return of Love that is the reunion of Prometheus (Life) with his divided self (III.iii.84ff). For Byron, "These hours [of Love], and only these, redeem Life's years of ill!" (*CH* II.lxxxi). The claim is extreme, but Byron, the neoclassical humanist, has nothing else (except fame). ¹⁶¹ In *The Corsair*, when Gulnare comes to Conrad in his cell, because he loves Medora he wants for nothing of importance, as we see in his indifference to escape. Gulnare, the wealthy sultana, lacks only Love and thus everything that matters, as shown in her willingness to risk all the rest. Then, when Conrad returns to find Medora dead, he knows that to lose her is to lose all. Love provides the universe's only moral cohesion, gives benign guidance to a mind and heart otherwise our persecutors.

Denis de Rougemont, in his article on "Love", stresses the need for obstacles, even hopelessness, in order that Love, the familiar emotional state, may approach the Christian longing for the spiritual and immortal ideal on earth which mimicked it. The late medieval and Renaissance creation of transcendent Love in a determined universe the late Romantics twisted into modern angst. In *Cain*, Lucifer is made to confess this estrangement, his tragic lack: an incapacity to love. This single want defines hell for Byron, and Lucifer is revealed as the Byronic hero stripped of this essential redemption. Without Love, we see Conrad return as Lara, heart hardened (*Corsair* xxiii) into a Keatsian or Coleridgean death-in-life. From the apocalyptic vision of a world lacking in Love in

¹⁵⁹ *PU* I.807-08. See also I.701.

¹⁶⁰ *PU* I.303-05. His mother, Earth, recognized his surrender, but erroneously thought it was to Zeus.

¹⁶¹ With the coming proximity of Shelley, his reliance on Love as redemption does not diminish. For example, the postexile, moralizing Byron took the Mazeppa tale, one ideally suited to his popular picaresque treatment, and made it almost exclusively a tale of redemption by Love.

"Darkness," Byron explores it further in *The Deformed Transformed*, which is in a sense even more disturbing in its psychological verisimilitude. Demogorgon warns us what horrors in man Love holds at bay (*PU* II.iv.19ff). The horrors are our (Calvinist) selves: the despair of Lara and Arnold (of *The Deformed Transformed*), the Ancient Mariner on his nightmare voyage, the hidden face of Lamia behind every happiness, the looming craggy forests beyond Psyche's walled garden, and worst of all what Coleridge saw within his own opium depths and fled.¹⁶² We are not then to take lightly Demogorgon's epilogue (IV.554ff) that warns of evil slumbering in his cave, awaiting each neglect of Love: "Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance / These are the seals of that most firm assurance / Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength. . . ." Love is necessary "to reassume / An empire o'er the disentangled doom."

¹⁶²Wordsworth knew no active demons, only the slow creeping despair of life seen slipping into earth-clod dullness.

CHAPTER VI SEPARATENESS

We know that Keats does not leave *Endymion* fallen. Out of his quiescent will, born of his apprenticeship of despair, he has earned his ascent. Keats concludes *Endymion* with the unity he wanted, with sensual and Platonic Love brought to synthesis; that is, he confirmed "the holiness of the heart's affections," a matter of critical importance, because proof of this allowed for the heart to be confirmed as the infallible guide to the beauty which is truth. And as truth is eternal, the heart is confirmed as the link of man to the immortal, spiritual world. As the careers of the other major Romantic poets preceding him have shown, this synthesis could not hold, not, at least, outside of Christian theology, which is where Coleridge and Blake found and clung to the promised synthesis.

Wordsworth fought separateness from its first intimation in his late twenties (beginning in "Tintern Abbey" and intensifying through the "Lucy" and the "Matthew" poems of his twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth years), conceding to the inevitable only with "Ode to Dejection," at age thirty-four. Shelley faced the dilemma of separateness in *Alastor* (1816) at age twenty-four, but as he bound his faith to social, as much as religious, utopia, he did not begin to feel wide-ranging distress until his late twenties (in his case expressed mostly in the smaller verse). Coleridge abandons Priestley and goes in search of Kant at age twenty-six to twenty-seven (Fichte embarks on the same quest also at age twenty-seven). Poor Keats precociously edged into despair at age twenty-four, but he had not surrendered to separateness yet, and we will never know where his speculations would have tended. There comes the crest of a hill, when youth suddenly sees mortality in the distance, when he understands limits, goals not to be reached and potential squandered. This comes for most in the latter few years approaching thirty. Byron departed Britain, exiled, world-weary, and ready for a new morality at age twenty-eight; the lines he penned after crossing the channel betray the change: "In strength to bear what Time can not abate, / And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate" (*CH* III.vii). In Harold, he tells us of himself: "Time, who changes all, had altered him . . . years steal / Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb" (viii). There was still *Manfred* to come, spurred by the fire of

still-youthful Shelley, but it was an aberration amid the likes of Prometheus and Bonivard; even Napoleon joins the chastened ranks (*CH* III.xxxix-xl). He descends into doubts, lamentations, and his postexile autobiographical sketch: Sardanapalus. (The coming revival of satiric Byron is only possible when he no longer cares, when despair "a smilingness assumes.") The hormones of youth give way and freshness wanes. Literary scholars ought to take account of the age of the artist as well as the artist in his Age.

Separateness is yet another resignation before the relentless schism of body and soul, corporeal and spiritual man. It looks back beyond Plato's separation of the perceived and the eternal world, to the very roots of mythology. Very early religion shared with Plato and modern religion the conviction that reality exists in an ironic relationship with man, that the unperceived, eternal things, the powers, creative and motive, behind the visible reality were somehow more "real," more significant and enduring. Early acceptance of this division, as in Homer, gradually evolved under influences from the East into attempts to bridge the gap from the human side. This effort defines religion, an effort motivated by an inescapable human yearning for the security of order, purpose, and authority (perhaps the still-echoing want of the child).

In our Christian culture, separateness became the secular recognition of innate corruption, of man as fallen from his imagined potential. Keats, Wordsworth, and Shelley sought to deny its innateness or the necessity of it, to prove that union, synthesis with immortality, was possible to man himself, not under the conditions set by established religions. Keats had most to lose in this gamble of performing without the safety net of Christianity. When his hope failed, chronicled by the great odes of 1819, only his timely death saved him from a vacancy for which he had no obvious answer. Wordsworth retreated into a conservative, shallow orthodoxy. Shelley carried himself with more confidence in his heterodoxy, was sustained for a while by social hopes, native stubbornness, and philosophy. Coleridge struggled to prove the Christian compromise of accepting earthly separateness in trade for immortal unity, holding to Christian faith with a death-grip, fending off separateness by its dogmatic promises, justifying, apologizing. We have seen his answer and he figures little in this chapter. Byron alone embraced separateness, a prophet of the modern intellectual cloud of

delusions made self-conscious by skepticism. He figures greatly in this chapter. Romantic separateness marks the collapse of the last great intellectual fling at religion, at a metaphysic meaningful in an empirical age. From this point, Western religion stands on the outside of power, reduced to justifying itself in the Wordsworthian compromise of keeper of traditions, focus of social morality.

Weltschmerz, the despair of the imagination and hope frustrated from its object is the next step from failed transcendence. It is the frustration just beginning to unsettle Wordsworth in the "Matthew" poems. But this remains Byronic territory. Byron stands as the great pivot of hope into hopelessness in nineteenth-century intellectual thought. No less an authority on angst than Nietzsche looks directly back to him:

Nun is aber die Tragödie die, dass man jene Dogmen der Religion und Metaphysik nicht glauben kann, wenn man die strenge Methode der Wahrheit im Herzen und Kopft hat, andererseits durch die Entwicklung der Menschheit so zart, reizbar, leidend geworden ist, um Heil--und Trostmittel der höchsten Art nöthig zu haben; woraus also die Gefahr entsteht, dass der Mensch sich an der erkannten Wahrheit verblute.¹⁶³

And he quotes Byron ("Sorrow is Knowledge," *Manfred* l.i.10ff), whom he admired almost as a prophet.

Gothicism in literature, a style and mode of thinking in the sublime, had always contained a blackness, a fatal curiosity for the glimpse into hell. It served the eighteenth century as a release from the dullness of prudence and common sense; it intrigued that which in the most rational of minds betrays the inner animal. It arose out of the neglected heart of man, and darkness regained its half of the human day. Men (and women) need risk, the affirmation of a Manichaeian universe. Our aching need for security makes sense only where we can identify a danger from which to be secure. The cosy fireside or snug bed most comforts

¹⁶³"The tragedy is that we cannot believe the dogmas of religion and metaphysics if we have the strict methods of truth in heart and head, but on the other hand, we have become through the development of humanity so tenderly sensitively suffering that we need the highest kind of means of salvation and consolation: whence arises the danger that man may bleed to death through the truth that he recognizes, or, more correctly, from discovered error" (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, [*Human, all-to-Human*], I.3. sec 109; *Werke* 4(2): 108.

when it storms outside. Men will invent danger if circumstances do not provide it, as with the gothic revival of the eighteenth century.

Also, as a style, the gothic typically sought to synthesize the mirrored forces of disorder in outer Nature and inner man into a single experience. *King Lear* is the ultimate expression of this synthesis, and Keats honored it as such. The gothic engaged Keats more deeply than his light forays into classicism. In contrast, Shelley's emotional hyperbole obscures a fundamentally rational mind. This merging of inner and outer sublimity characterized the obsessions of Fuseli and Turner, Kant and the idealists, and Wordsworth. Each of the Romantic poets came to recognize that demonstrations of the power of the irrational (that which was beyond the will of men or gods), effectively denies destiny and progress, be it providential or humanistic, because it denies Necessity, divine and mechanical. It did so, as the random will do, without any corresponding resurrection of the freewill. Each of the poets understood this tendency, and under these terms, only Keats and Byron, the most modern and least philosophical, continued to accept the gothic view of reality.

Wordsworth led his poetic age into the disillusionment of separateness because he first explored the dark passages out of the Chamber of Maiden Thought. He found no light, and retired into defensive conservatism, his inspiration withering. Here, I suspect, lies the real Wordsworthian "apostasy," his embodiment of younger men's worst fears.

VI.A The Failure of Revelation

Perhaps Keats had too much working class common sense to indulge long in ethereal imaginings, even his own uniquely sensual sort. But perhaps the very gulf between his practical mind and his poetic imagination cursed him most of all. In *Lamia* he dismantles both the idealist and materialist extremes, leaving them in the ruins of their own inadequacy and letting us know that truth lies in synthesis. The syntheses of sensual and spiritual, passionate and Platonic, love and death, are all of the material and metaphysical world; for Keats, the greatest of these was that of beauty (mutable and mortal) and truth (eternity and changelessness). In "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (May 1819), the urn stands forth and proclaims their synthesis, proclaims a revelatory transcendentalism with the certainty of a prophet, "a friend to man, to whom thou say'st, / 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'--that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Keats, however, was not Shelley, and the urn is a dramatic character, not a prophet, and he knew it spoke only for itself; man lived in a different world. He had qualified the message of the nightingale, in its ode, with the word "forlorn," a cautionary word from poet to reader. The effect is the same as Shelley's addendum to the message of Ozymandias: "The lone and level sands stretch far away." That a similar caveat does not follow the pronouncement of the urn does not give us leave to forget that the urn speaks, not the poet; and even more, the urn speaks to the poet, not to us. It advises the poet (artist) in his craft, in his communion with eternal truth through beauty. It ignores the fact that the poet is also a mortal man, a curse the urn does not share but one giving its message to us a poignancy.

The entire ode is structured as a dialectic (as are the other odes). Stanzas one to three (except the final two lines) are thesis: Beauty is Truth, both in art (on the urn), as an expression of the eternal, and in the eternal itself (in "heaven's bourne"). This truism takes the line of pre-Hellenic Grecian art, classical architecture, and Platonic philosophy, that things are true ("more real") the closer they approach ideal forms. The neoclassicists defined it for the Renaissance and Enlightenment: "For all beauty is truth. True Features make the beauty of a face;

and true proportions the beauty of architecture; as true measures that of harmony and musick" (Shaftesbury, *Characteristics* 1: 2.4.3.94). All was harmony in Nature, and morality the name of that harmony. Shelley draws on classicism when he equates truth with beauty, and therefore beauty with virtue (what a dangerous second step!) in *The Witch of Atlas*.

Stanza four (plus the two lines preceding it) is antithesis: Truth is not Beauty on earth, in a world of time and space. The questions in stanza four: "Who," asking identity (particularity), and "To what" and from "what," asking spatial information, bring us down sharply from the ether of art and heaven to the mortal world of particular things, of time and space.

Stanza five is synthesis; but the two worlds come together only in the imagination of the poet. The urn tells us that the message "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is true in art and heaven. This can be known only by a message from that realm; it cannot be directly experienced "on earth," simply because it is not the case on earth. Except, that is, in the imagination of the poet, in that one power in which Keats placed his hopes of transcendence. Keats worked a delicate foreplay on the urn, cautiously approaching its secret, stanza by stanza deeper into its life, but he fell away in stanza three, the attempted merging having failed. The urn leaves him (as he leaves us) with a consolation, a statement of a truth in heaven that may not apply on earth, but still one which the poet endlessly must seek.

Once Keats had hoped for more, as we have seen.

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth--whether it existed before or not,--for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. . . . The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream,--he awoke and found it truth. . . . (ltr. to Bailey, 22 Nov 1817)

From the assumption of the holiness (i.e. guide to the *summum bonum*) of the heart's affections, we cannot err in pursuit of truth. The imagination, directed by the heart, perceives (or, the idealist would say, creates) beauty in an external image. This beauty, in its harmony and because singled out by the infallible heart, must be true. The heart's "passions" (an unfortunate word for "feelings"), then,

guarantee the truth.

Throughout the odes Keats struggled with transcendence, not accepting the negative answers, arriving finally at "To Autumn" (Sept 1819). Here he comes closest to it, to a suspension of time in the fullness of sensation, a ripeness, a fully indulged beauty. That it is finally but words, a literary achievement rather than a lasting state of the imagination, demonstrates the triumph of separateness. Though he nearly created a poetic Grecian urn of his own, the poet and we still remain outside, receiving messages of a world we cannot join. And implicit in this poem is a further recognition that for life, if not for art, the fact that beauty equals truth is not all an earth-bound poet needs to know. He also needs to know that ripeness needs harvesting, that fullness is followed by death (the festival ends, heifer sacrificed, and village again populated), that winter follows autumn. This is where life falls away from art, as the poet from the urn, the imagination tumbling like Endymion from its brief flights. There is an intended self-consciousness about "To Autumn" that confesses to the frailty of the implied hope of permanence, a slight overripeness hanging in the air, tugging at us, reminding us of work to be done. But it is mixed with its antithesis, a deeply indulged draught of the passing cup of the fullest possible measure. Though fleeting, the moment does matter ("thou hast thy music too").

VI.A.1 Acquired Corruption: Dulling Maturity

Wordsworth's associative stages of development (see MS Y draft) speak of a progress of perception and value that, in the case of the favored few, travels from the open receptivity of a young child, through obsession with transitory things and grosser pleasures, through rationalism, and finally to a return to the blessed state of unity with eternity and God, a return to childlike receptivity and the direct perception of the eternal. But as we have seen, beginning around 1798 and continuing through 1805 he grows increasingly more anxious about his own personal inability to arrive at this final state. As his own life moves past rationalism, instead of coming to revelation he feels himself slipping repeatedly into insensitivity, his eyes were not becoming the eyes of a child, but simply growing old and dim. This process may be thought of as "dulling maturity." and

comprises the encrustations of habit and custom--those archetypal Romantic villains--of settling opinion and growing self-interest.

how false and inaccurate the judgements we form of things? I despair of ever receiving the same degree of pleasure from the most excellent performances of genius, which I felt at that age, from pieces which my present judgement regards as trifling and contemptible. (Edmund Burke, *Sublime and Beautiful*, Introduction "On Taste," 25)

But Burke lets the lament end and moves on; he never assumes that time could be recaptured, or even that it should. As an adult, a creature of reason, he accepts that learning and aesthetic delight must arise from our understanding: "I am convinced that the understanding operates and nothing else . . ." (26). Wordsworth, as we know sought a return to childhood receptivity, based the possibility of moral and spiritual revelation beyond understanding, and grieved over the collapse of his hopes when it proved irretrievable.

The superiority of the childhood perception over the adult is one point of "We are Seven" (1798) where the empiricism of the adult shows him damningly limited, his very maturity giving him a practical bent that renders him incapable of understanding. Here, the girl's intuitive understanding of the essential unity of things beyond the illusion of separateness remains triumphant over the limited horizons of the adult. In "Anecdote for Fathers" (1798), the father's view prevails, and the result is a moral transgression: lying. Certainly, for Wordsworth, any denial of unity, any assertion of distinctions and particulars, any victory of human cognitive vision over direct perception or intuition, would be a moral transgression.

Gradually, he comes to recognize his own inability to ascend to true revelation, the blessed certainty of a saintly man, rather than face the defeat of a return to the dull habits of common day. In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1804), that very inability is confirmed. The poem's 1802 stanzas, the first four, ended with the separateness unresolved; two years later he seems resigned to acceptance of the lesser world which had been haunting him since "Tintern Abbey" (1798):

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;

In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.
(180ff)

This sort of stoic Christianity is not in direct conflict with his belief in the associative progression, for the final step in the ascent surely exists, even if hypothetically, or only for the likes of St. Basil and other imaginative or historical abstractions. But it is, by 1804, virtually unattainable.

In "Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora" (1804), the child is as the moon, something ever changeful yet ever renewed, the child in its wonder and delight at each new discovery and the moon in its phases. Each will suffer separation from the objects of its pure delight, each will have its senses become opaque, dulled to the world--the moon by passing clouds--and each will know the decline of age--the moon by degrees diminished. Yet, the resemblance stops here, for Dora will have

Changed countenance, like an object sullied o'er
By breathing mist; and thine appears to be
A mournful labour, while to her [the moon] is given
Hope, and a renovation without end.
(62ff)

Man is linear, Nature cyclical (when not timeless and unchanging). The moon is renewed; the clouds pass and the moon's face returns to fullness, the month passes and the moon is reborn. Ultimately, the moon is of the eternal and the child is not. This is separateness confirmed; the gulf is unbridgeable between human beings and the eternal. Yet he ends with a certain gesture towards unity, a harmonious unity of effort between the human and divine will in the moral education of the child. It is an important point for Wordsworth, fundamental to the developmental process, but it does not substitute for the unity which he craves. That the child grows morally in its communion with eternal things is never denied, but the hope that the adult may work in concert with the eternal by sharing in the educating of the child and may see vicariously through the child's eyes is little satisfaction.

His preoccupation between 1798 and 1805 with dulling maturity and separateness creates a mongrel parade of poetic attitudes, at times cheering and joyous, more often bitter and fatalistic, most often compromised between resignation and hope. In "The Kitten and Falling Leaves" (1804-05), he regrets the "melancholy reason" (112) that afflicts adulthood (the analytic reason that seeks to replace sensual perceptivity and spontaneity). But despite the inevitability of it, still, "when time brings on decay, / Now and then I may possess / Hours of perfect gladsomeness" (114-116). Yet, this comes as a homily, not at all organic to the poem, but with the feeling of something artificially attached, an obligatory gesture that does not convince. "Three years she grew in sun and shower" (1799) stresses the associative mechanism of pleasure and pain by its inclusion in the very title, but how pointless it seems before the fact of her death. The Narrator stands where stood Matthew in "The Two April Mornings," unable to reconcile his own emotions to the eternal justice of Nature.¹⁶⁴ The child never matured beyond being a pure organic thing of Nature (never, that is, advanced to Dante's age of reason), and when her uncorrupted soul returns to its universal home, he ought to rejoice. But again, we see Wordsworth concerned with this life; the Narrator can no more be comforted than Matthew; for him she will not return, cyclically like the flower. Nature's gain is man's loss and he cannot harmonize his own needs with the greater purposes of the whole. This stands in stark contrast to the easy harmony of "We are Seven." From that poem, in 1798, through "The Two April Mornings," and arriving at "Three years she grew in sun and shower" within a single year, we have a picture of Wordsworth certain of the full harmony of the child, as a soul newly arrived, and of a world of adults lost irrevocably to this harmony. Only "The Two April Mornings" offers any consolation for the adult; but the "witty rhymes" ring hollow, and the picture remains gloomy.

This descent into total estrangement from the cycles of Nature arrives at "The Small Celandine" (1803-04), where the empty wish that "Age might but take the things Youth needed not!" he had long since seen answered in himself, and the

¹⁶⁴Wordsworth will often employ a flawed, typically shortsighted narrator, a strategy which can obscure the poet's own attitude. I always try to spot the poet himself in the shrubbery.

true Necessity in life was no moral progress, but the "necessity in being old." Whereas he could hope the child to be the father of the man, increasingly he could not believe it. In the 1804 verses of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (contrasted with those of 1802), he dispenses with denials and unfelt hopes:

The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

.....

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!
(72ff, 127ff)

He reached his nadir, whence succored by Christianity, in "Elegiac Stanzas . . . Peele Castle" (1806).

The Prelude, mostly of 1804-05, wraps us in swirling thought, passages of both despair and hope, of dulling maturity confirmed and denied, all reflecting some personal confusion and some of the didactic and social pressures he felt in a poem to Coleridge. His turbulent doubts he quieted, if not tamed, by the balm of Christian orthodoxy and by the weariness from strife that enables this very maturity he dreads to bring peace of mind. Despite scattered optimism elsewhere in the poem, this from *The Prelude* tells the story as it was tending at the time of completion:

The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life; the hiding places of my power
Seem open, I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
May scarcely see at all; and I would give
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration. (11.333ff)

The "spirit of the past" that lives today is in its very nature immortal, safe from mutability and decay as he is not. I will note as an example of the ambivalence of

his position that, while this confirms what was only feared in "Tintern Abbey" (1798), it denies the powers claimed for the favored few in *Prelude* 2.275ff (written 1799, but retained 1805). It is also directly countered in his words not eighty lines earlier, (written several months later), in the passage concerning his recovery from the crisis of rationalism, where he resurrects himself from the ashes to again stand "as I stand now, / A sensitive, and a *creative* soul" (11.255-56). This dramatic return, the forceful spurning of analytic reason for synthetic imagination, sacrifices in accuracy, in honest expression of current doubts, as it gains in drama. But this was ever characteristic of Wordsworth; he would permit himself awkward optimism while elsewhere being fully, even painfully, needing to confess.

The Necessity of any progress to virtue had surely gone, however. I have hoped to establish that Wordsworth mostly allowed for the objects of Nature to have a universal and necessary initial virtue, all who perceived the things of Nature and eternity acquired the mental images from which virtue may be fashioned, have in their memories the tools for the working of the associative forces (be they Nature, imagination, or mechanism).

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, directing those to works of love
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.
(*Prelude*, 1805, 5.516ff)

But the associative process beyond the initial effect of first sensations, the movement of the mind toward a virtuous adult (something the early virtuous impressions had only begun) would become in the revised *Prelude* at best no more than a "tendency:"

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, to works of unreprieved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those
Who care not, know not, think not what they do.
(*Prelude*, 1850, 5.491ff)

The actual working of the associative process he does not doubt, but for even a "favoured being" like himself it seemed ever less likely to guarantee a sufficiently enlightened conclusion.

That he does see himself as the most favored of favored men is borne out by book thirteen of *The Prelude* (139ff), if at all doubted. He claims to be one not only the benefactor of a childhood under Nature's ministry and an innate inner nature sensitive and graciously composed, but one who has shown that the associative process to virtue does indeed work. But he admits, as he looks at himself, that the process may be necessary in the bringing of some improvement to men, as his village neighbors are kinder than city dwellers, but that the ultimate gains are humble and indeed humbling. Although we have the potential for full communion with the eternal, of knowing the tranquillity that comes with it, still "A humbler destiny have we retraced, / And told of lapse and hesitating choice . . ." (*Prelude*, 1850, 14.136ff). Rare are the moments "When I / Am worthy of myself" (1.360-61).

Shelley also affirms the failure of the Necessity once assured by associationism. He longs for a recovery of a childhood empowered by the Necessity of the Absolute power, like Wordsworth, "The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven." Yet passiveness itself fails; the emptying of the will leaves a vacuum, as open to an evil as to a good power, active and purposeful in its rush into the void to assume the mantle of the will. When a vacuum, or filled with a desert-making evil, then the separateness which Shelley calls a "vacancy" scorches hope to cinders.

and yet man,
As long as he shall be the child of earth,
Might almost 'weep to have' what he may lose--
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
(*Prelude* 5.23ff)

This is Byronic, the sufferer denied even a surcease in death.

Julian observes this contrast, the decline of the adult from the child, as he comments to Maddalo:

See
This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;
She spends a happy time with little care,
While we to . . . sick thoughts subjected are. . . .
(Shelley, "Julian and Maddalo" 166ff)

Shelley then turns from Wordsworth and Byron to reassert hope's insatiable need to believe that evil not be necessary, that either it be error--"it is our will / That thus enchains us to permitted ill-- / We might be otherwise"--or that a higher power can redeem us from our pain and mortality. Shelley tried to combine the mechanism of the former with the millennial promise of the latter. But, though on a higher plane of imagination, he succumbs to maturity like Wordsworth: "A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed / One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud" ("Ode to the West Wind," 47-55).

Some loss of hope comes with the mortal Fall each of us must suffer upon reaching the age of reason, or for Byron, whenever we see the truth of our lot on this earth. Byron could see things in terms of dulling maturity if he chose:

Ah! joyous season! when the mind
Dares all things boldly but to lie!
When Thought ere spoke is unconfin'd,
And sparkles in the placid eye.

9.

Not so in Man's maturer-years,
When Man himself is but a tool;
When Interest sways our hope and fears,
And all must love and hate by rule.
("To a Youthful Friend," Aug 1808)

The freedom of childhood turns into the dismal Necessity of life in society. Society is his villain here, but there remains a suggestion of an inner canker coming to bloom as the child matures. The natural innocence of childhood is retained in the personages of Childe Harold and Don Juan. This serves him as a satiric device, however, more than a statement on the child's moral soul.

Two poems of the early months of married life (we are not surprised) resurrect the theme: "Stanzas for Music [There's not a joy . . .]" (Mar 1815), where the general decay of youthful passions is joined by the specifically Byronic obsession of the special curse of the imaginative few, and, "On the Death of the Duke of Dorset" (Mar 1815) where the sorrows of life are likened to drops of cave water on the heart, which

dropping harden there:
They cannot petrify more fast,
Than feelings sunk remain,
Which coldly fixed regard the past,
But never melt again.

For Byron the loss is more Keatsian than Wordsworthian; he laments "Feeling's dull decay" not as the loss of revelation of the eternal, but of the full sensuality of earthly experience. This is why his antipathy to society, for it imposes strictures on behavior which debilitate life, develops customs which dull sensation and joy by repetition (the routine sex life of a marriage is a pertinent example). Yet simple physiological maturation, he knew by 1815, also causes a decline in interest in simple sensual joys, brings a constitutional seriousness that withers vitality: "Our senses narrow, and our reason frail . . . and Men grow pale / Lest their own judgements should become too bright, / And their free thoughts be crimes. . . . And thus they plod in sluggish misery, / Rotting from Sire to son, and age to age . . ." (*CH* IV.xciii-iv). In *The Prisoner of Chillon* (Jun 1816), Byron offers a metaphor for the decay and degradation of man in society, the enervation of the will, in Bonivard. Gradually his horizons narrowed and narrowed, his natural passions withered, the hope and striving of his will melted into the mature man's need for security:

My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:--even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.
(389ff)

Likewise Grattan, in "The Irish Avatar" (Nov 1821), was betrayed by the very people he hopes to free; they too will buy the comfort of security with servility.

Wordsworth, in the dark passages leading from Keats' Chamber of Maiden Thought, fought to reclaim some hope from the sinking pit of maturity. In the line that occupied the place of the MS Y draft of the six stages of development in the 1805 *Prelude*, he foregoes the extended exposition and proceeds from an admission that the "delight" and "eagerness" "Which flashes from the eyes of babes in arms" will not endure, to a buoyant assertion of gains to be enjoyed at each level of growth and of a greater, deeper understanding to compensate for the

loss of receptivity (as with Burke, above). "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1804) advances from the separateness quoted earlier to a grasping of the remaining rags of associationism. It arrives at an assertion that all the virtue drunk in by our senses, not "all that is at enmity with joy, / Can utterly abolish or destroy" (160-61), nor the immortal soul itself completely forget, lose all contact with its parent eternity ("that immortal sea"). At least we can recover, not the actual experience of eternity itself but eternal things "in thought," not immortality but intimations of it.

We find Wordsworth at last in *The Excursion* resolved in part to a pragmatic, livable compromise. The Wanderer, the best melding of faith and practical wisdom, of sweet reasonableness and experience, tries to bring the Solitary (Wordsworth's phlegmatic self) to see that though he does manage to love what he should love, the true things of eternity, the easy yet cold rewards of the intellect have lured him into self-absorption and slavery to his will. He urges him to turn from thought alone, which reveals only disharmony in the world, to sensitivity instead, where "music waits upon your skillful touch, / Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights / Hears, and forgets his purpose . . ." (4.571ff). Again, we have wise passiveness and its attendant selflessness. Childhood remains a time when the soul knew "her own native vigour," now in memory as "memorial footsteps" and "Reverberations," vital but secondary (9.38-41).

With faith in his heart, the poet reaffirms the value of the consolation of understanding for intuition. He can even speak of being "freed from" the often conflicting and distracting noises of his youth, disturbing the "finer passages of sense" (9.76). He continues to aspire to the godlike Stoic perspective atop Helvellyn, or above the vale of the Wye (of sixteen years before):

What more than that the severing should confer
Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,
And hear the mighty stream of tendency
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,
A clear sonorous voice, inaudible
To the vast multitude; whose doom it is
To run the giddy round of vain delight,
Or fret and labour on the Plain below.
(9.85ff)

Dulling maturity does mean a separateness, a "severing" from our childhood sources of power; we are no longer able to sport along the shore. But in our wearisome journey back to the sea, we might profit from the untrodden high road. And we might find intimations of power in ancient ruins and the things of Nature. If the Necessity to revelation, even now the hope for true virtue, has faded, Wordsworth will settle for the small victories: "*Enough, if something from our hands have power / To live, and act, and serve the future hour*" (Duddon Sonnet, no. 34, "After-Thought," prob. 1818). But a new generation had taken him at his word once and had little patience for the vacillations of an aging apostate.

VI.A.2 Inherent Limitations: "impassioned clay"

Bound to the earth, he lifts his eye to Heaven--
Is't not enough, Unhappy Thing! to know / Thou art?"¹⁶⁵

Manfred desires a Shelleyan unity in Platonic love (agape), reflecting *Manfred's* composition in the autumn following the Geneva summer. Byron's chief searcher after sensual unity (eros) is Sardanapalus (composed after some time away from Shelley). Like Faust,¹⁶⁶ he failed, recognizing the lamentable futility of his hope with Stoic dignity. Men really know little of life except:

pain or pleasure--two names for one feeling,
Which our internal, restless agony
Would vary in the sound, although the sense
Escapes our highest efforts to be happy.
(V.i.35ff)

Still, it is Manfred who suffers the most vivid moment of that failure. His unity of greatest happiness with greatest sorrow centers on the one figure of Astarte. The deadly dialectic, fatal because it cannot be synthesized, comes to an electric crisis with her appearance. His fondest hopes on the verge of fulfillment, he rises to a feverish peak--"I yet might be most happy" (I.i.190)--only to see her and them instantly vanish: "My heart is crushed!" (191). She (Love) is his salvation and

¹⁶⁵Byron, *Childe Harold* II.iii.

¹⁶⁶See I: 1766, 2923.

destruction at once (within two lines), his destroyer and preserver. Her vanishing expresses in an instant the totality of alienation in Byron. Separateness is complete; there is no reconciliation and nothing else worthy of striving for. (Or at least so it seems; Byron, however, is no absolutist.) What is called modern "angst" or "Weltschmerz" ("world pain"), Thorslev in *The Byronic Hero* defines as:

the conflict of two contradictory drives, one toward total commitment, toward loss of self in a vision of absolutes, the other toward a skeptical and even aggressive assertion of self in a world which remains external and even alien. (141)

The first forever struggles for the light, to rediscover religion or its surrogate, the other forever denies its existence or power.

In Mary's terms, Shelley struggled to know the underlying Being (as opposed to the circumferential Mind), the expression of the even deeper One, of which all phenomena are but mental states or modes, to "lift the painted veil" on that Being "which is veiled from our imperfect senses in the unknown realm, the mystery of which his poetic thought sought in vain to penetrate" (Preface to *Essays*; *Works* 5: x). Describing the same failure, in an opposing and less apposite metaphor, Goethe has Faust physically thwarted from the moment of transcendence, like Icarus, like Keats' poet ascending the steps toward Moneta. In part two of *Faust*, he likens the moment to viewing the sun rise over the edge of a mountain: "Sie tritt hervor!--und, leider schon geblendet, / Kehr ich mich weg, vom Augenschmerz durchdrungen."¹⁶⁷ He learns that this life is indeed as Plato envisioned, in a cave with our backs to the light, knowing of a higher reality but unable to know it directly: "So bleibe denn die Sonne mir im Rücken!"¹⁶⁸ Still, like Plato, Kant, and Coleridge, he believed that by the aid of this light, we might know the truth of this world at least.

The precise nature of this higher state becomes very problematical in Keats; he struggles repeatedly to the golden door, but he cannot see within.

¹⁶⁷"He clears the rim!--Alas, already blinded, / I turn aside, my mortal vision smarting" (2.4702-703).

¹⁶⁸"So, sun in back, my eye too weak to scan it" (2.4715).

Wherein lies Happiness? In that which beck
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven!
(*Endymion* 1.777ff)

But we do not behold it. His pointing at it does us no good without a description. Phrases like "fellowship with essence" will suffice for scholars in describing the hazy conceptions of poets, but the poets themselves, if they would be prophets, must do better. I might be thought unfair to Keats; many have supposed a heaven, but few have the poetic gifts to realize their vision. I only complain that Keats' poetic mentors--Milton, Dante, and Spenser--all formalized their vision for us. Shelley gives us time and again millennial visions with a superb tangibleness of sight and sound. Even in two poets with no heaven to sell, Wordsworth lets us glimpse through the clouds from atop Snowdon and Byron takes us to *The Island*. Metaphors for man's inability to inhabit the heights, common to all these poets, do not excuse the imagination from describing the place (or state). Keats did not want the poetic skill or ample imagination; I suggest rather that he had no vision, had very little idea of what sort of heaven he wanted. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn" he as much as admits this.

He would like to conceive a sensual transcendence, one quite different from the Christian heaven. In "Sonnet (Bright star)" (early 1818), he consciously distinguishes a transcendental sensual fulfillment from the cold ideal of the polar star (i.e the Neo-Platonic eternal). Like Shelley, but even more so, he balks at the coldness, the want of the warmth of life of this perfection (Shelley's metaphor was the moon). Of course, although sensual his heaven would by no means be licentious; the heightened senses would be refined, not more powerfully indulged. This much he shares with Epicurean philosophy. He makes this point, significantly, to the philosophical Christian, Bailey (22 Nov 1817).¹⁶⁹ A "life of Sensations," he writes,

¹⁶⁹Like Coleridge, he was ever tailoring the expression of his thoughts, if not the thoughts themselves, to accommodate the prejudices of his audience.

is "a Vision in the form of Youth," a shadow of reality to come--And this consideration has further convinced me--for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite speculation of mine,--that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone. . . .

It is a heaven of Platonic ideals of the earthly sensations, a higher form of familiar reality. This is the easy part, as any conception of heaven will almost have to be imagined in forms based on human experience--our minds cannot imagine what we do not know of. But what this might be his vague musings do not explore. We only know that we approach this conception when we are "mounted on the Wings of Imagination, so high" that we realize "that the prototype must be hereafter."

Nonetheless, Keats needed badly that revelation be possible; he conceived an alert and illuminating doctrine of truth approached through beauty to allow for it; he had sacrificed the Titans on the altar of mutability that Apollo might have his godhead. But Apollo, the Apollo in Keats, could not cross. Keats' only strategy was passiveness, Negative Capability, and thus his imagination only lapped ineffectually at the threshold of heaven. Like Shelley, he lacked a religion to give him the materials for the nature of transcendent state; unlike Shelley, he did not work at conceiving his own but waited for his imagination to reveal it to him. He would not appeal to Milton or Dante, whose conceptions were irreducibly Christian and postmortal. When he writes his brother and sister-in-law upon the death of Tom that "I have scarce a doubt of immortality of some nature or other--neither had Tom" (about 18 Dec 1818), we suspect that the sentiment is half reassurance only, and half honest vagueness. Keats needed a secular, earthly state of purity of the heart and total creative freedom for the imagination in commerce with the things of eternity (like art). He required the "blessed mood" of Wordsworth, a more profound Stoic tranquillity, a peace out of time and space, combined with the heightened visions of a Blake or Shelley. Shelley should have been his model, but Shelley offered more social utopias than personal, which was not Keats' interest. Shelley does touch on instances of personal blessedness (I am not counting the conventions of medieval romance) in *The Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *Epipsychidion*, none of which Keats is known to have read. The one work he did read and which deeply impressed him was *Alastor*, Shelley's monument to failed transcendence.

Surely he felt the lack. Wordsworth's cautious humility in "Tintern Abbey" struck a chord with Keats:

that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened. . . . (37ff)

Keats's utter fascination with the phrase "burden of the mystery," suggests an affinity for Wordsworth's quietism, if only indirectly, and the nameless (for him) and taxing sublimity of what he could not express.

VI.A.2.a The Tyrannies of the Past

In *Hyperion*, Oceanus evokes a secular Stoicism, an acceptance of the passing of things, participation in the eternal only as a temporal step over which the present passes in becoming the future. The poem also presents the Titans as gradually fading to oblivion. There is no Christian immortality for these pre-Christian pagans, as we might expect. But in "Sonnet (When I have fears that I may cease to be)," Jan 1818, he thinks of himself in these same terms. If he is to be denied the immortality of the poet (through enduring works) and since there is no heaven of immortal sensual love, "then on the shore / Of the wide world I stand alone, and think / Till love and fame to nothingness do sink." As the rolling sea lifts thoughts out of time, two earthly powers that presumed to endurance--love and fame--are revealed in their mortality. And he offers here nothing else in their stead, no belief in any sort of immortality beyond those monuments to love and fame, those works of the imagination, that is, art.

The Titans move inexorably into the only sort of immortality possible on earth; they provide, in fact, the paradigm of the best that the secular poet, whose hopes stop at fame and the immortality of his verse, may hope for. The descent of the Titans takes them from rule, to deposition, to history, to oblivion. Keats illustrates this by their subtle passage through the world of art; the Titans, that is, slowly become statuary. Their time slows, they grow more static and immobile. *Hyperion* begins in *medias res*, with Saturn already deposed and already "quiet as a stone." We know that he once had vigorous life by the footprints in the sand;

these have now become bas-reliefs themselves, subjects for archeology. Even his body seems detached, composed of unrelated, disassemblable parts; his eyes are described as the chiseled eyes of sculpture, and he leans down as if to rejoin the earth itself:

Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unscptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.
(1.17ff)

His arm hangs with the monumentality of Christ's arm in Titian's *Entombment*, and he slumps with the crushing weight of the winged giant chained to the earth in Blake's *Frontispiece to "America"*. Reinforcing by contrast, Keats tells us of Thea: "how unlike marble was that face" (34).

By *The Fall of Hyperion*, Saturn has become broken, ancient sculpture, another Ozymandias: "this old image here, / Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell, / Is Saturn's" (1.224ff). Now, in the poet's own present, they have drifted into legend, and the descent to oblivion will be complete when they have slipped beyond the reach of even the memories of men. We are given such a case, and in this are foretold the future of all our efforts, in *Hyperion*. The example seems especially directed at the written language of men, that is, poetry:

hieroglyphics old
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries:
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled. (1.277ff)¹⁷⁰

It might well be argued that Keats referred here to rational thought and the presumptions to wisdom of philosophers and scientists ("sages and . . . astrologers"). Yet the Romantics, ever in retreat, continually found themselves sharing the separateness they had tried to ascribe to others. Whoever was the

¹⁷⁰In his mind is the Rosetta stone, returned from Egypt in 1799 on the back of Napoleon's conquest, but mute ever since. Ironically, barely two years after the composition of this passage the code was deciphered and the stone did speak.

original subject of this passage, the metaphor returns to haunt him. Moneta (memory), for one, warns him: "thy bones / Will wither in few years, and vanish so / That not the quickest eye could find a grain . . ." (*The Fall of Hyperion* 1.110ff). For Keats, memory does not recall a continuity feeding faith, or spots of time associating in the mind for virtue, but reinforces a sense of loss and decay. Moneta leads him as an antithesis should, as Keats would insist that the pain of life teach the pleasure, as Virgil led Dante.

In Dante, Satan stands trapped in ice at the center of the universe, the furthest distance from God, the *Primum Mobile*, the all-embracing circumference. Lethe, the waters of forgetfulness, flow through Purgatory, washing the memory of sin from the souls enjoying purification, and collect in a pool around Satan. This he cools into ice by the frustrated beating of his wings, trapping him ever more securely, a metaphor for the Aristotelean and Aquinian doctrine of the increasingly necessitated pathway of sin, a Necessity driven by memory. Lethe baptizes Satan for eternity in the sloughed off sins of the saved. In fact, Dante almost defines suffering in the *Inferno* in terms of the torment of memory; so suggest the accounts of the damned. We may well understand why the best hope for death to the late Romantics would be what ^{Wordsworth} called "a sleep and a forgetting," and Byron, after Hamlet, "A sleep without dreams" (*DJ* XIV.iv).

This is why Moneta is the antithesis of what Keats hoped for in his revelation, her eternally lifeless and deathless face transparent to mankind's desperate memory. Keats had tried to claim that this knowledge had power to transcend that river of pain, to give Apollo his godhead (make the imagination as creative and free as divinity). "Alastor" in Greek means "the unforgetting one," a male Nemesis, avenger through the gadfly of memory. The youth in *Alastor* carried his own Moneta with him, Shelley hoping, with Wordsworth and Keats, that memory might provide the wings lifting them above time, to view the rabble parade of mankind from above. But it betrayed them and the three joined Byron as chroniclers of the tyrannies, not revelations, of memory. Standing before Keats now, Moneta only shows the horror unredeemed and unredeeming. She recalls "Death-in-Life" from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," who was the antithesis of Coleridge's best hope, the Christian promise of life-in-death. In a mockery of transcendental dreams of a synthesis of death and life, she neither lives nor dies.

Instead of Keats' eternity of sensual fullness, she represents a present, wan and sepulchral, an image of hopelessness, separateness under the lash of regret and remorse. That she is kind and gentle only confirms her as his fate, demonstrates the hopes the author placed in her. And Keats falls again from the steps of heaven.

Byron, of course, the *a priori* pessimist, knew immediately what role memory should play for him:

'Tis said with Sorrow Time can cope;
But this I feel can ne'er be true:
For by the death-blow of my Hope
My Memory immortal grew.
("Lines Written Beneath a Picture," Jan 1811)

Memory is always torment, redemption is forgetting. Manfred, when asked by the Seven Spirits in unison what he seeks from them, he replies with the ultimate boon, in the absence of Love, a lonely, single-word answer: "Forgetfulness" (I.i.136). The infamous Romantic "death wish," the suicides of Young Werther and his heirs, sought not death, but "a sleep and a forgetting." What we long to forget depends upon of whom the question is asked. Not for Byron Dante's Christian memory of sin; rather, he made monstrous Nemesis of the sort of personal loss Wordsworth treats as melancholy or sad remorse. Further, Byron employs guilt for crimes unnamed, uncommitted, for innate or original sin, as we have seen. It drives his picaresque heroes, as Lara by the memories "His mind would half exalt and half regret" (320), and the more melancholic men of his later, moralizing years: "I had forgotten half I would forget, / But it revives--Oh! would it were my lot / To be forgetful as I am forgot" ("The Lament of Tasso," Apr 1817, 4.79-81). Such memory makes mockery of reform or transcendence of the individual, and for the passionate heart only death brings surcease.

VI.A.2.b The Angel/Beast

I have discussed how the Romantics sought to fashion a morality out of the exceptional powers of the imaginative few. But Kant had echoed a timeless need when he asserted that true moral law had to be universal and necessary. How can a benevolent religion, or any moral system, dismiss the majority of men? I have

given Coleridge's Christian answer already in this paper, that the majority of men willingly choose evil, and the fact that God has foreknowledge of their choice does not mean that they have not chosen freely. The very existence of morality, its clear and evident power in the lives of men presupposes the free choice of men Kant had said. It still remains necessary that the capability for virtue be in all men, even if most do not exercise it. Thomas Browne had confirmed the Protestant (not Catholic or Socratic) moral dilemma: "we naturally know what is good, but naturally pursue what is evil" (*Religio Medici* 89). Certainly, few men are able to arrive at transcendental understanding of the supersensuous; the intellectual, philosophical road to salvation (which turns back before the end to base itself in feeling, as we have seen) is trod by only a few isolated figures. The most a Christian can say, faced with the words of Christ: "Many are called but few are chosen," and the confirmations of Paul, is Browne's "I do desire with God, that all, but yet affirm with men, that few shall know salvation; that the bridge is narrow . . ." (90).

We have come to the truth Byron never doubted: the Calvinist doctrine of the innate corruption of man. Wherever else he may have been of the Enlightenment, here he was not. His position is Christian, though he felt himself justified from experience. Coleridge, despite similar internal evidence, had to return to innate corruption for reasons of dogma, against his legitimate optimistic hopes. Even Shelley was to come around to innate corruption, an organic evil arising out of our very human nature, which only the few, a Jesus or Socrates, could transcend. When, in *The Triumph of Life*, even beloved Rousseau rises in the shape of a twisted, gnarled root, organically corrupted by his undisciplined passionate nature, we know that the last shreds of social hopes (based on the Necessity of virtue) have fled from Shelley. In his "mutiny within," Shelley has travelled from a Socratic denial of evil at least some way toward Byron's theocracy based on it.

When Byron soars to a view of mankind, he does so not with Dante or Spenser, but with Voltaire:

Le Ciel, en nous formant, mélangea notre vie
De désirs, de dégoûts, de raison, de folie,

De moments de plaisirs et de jours de tournaements:
De notre être imparfait voilà les éléments. . . .¹⁷¹

The man Manfred describes for us:

Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mixed essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our Mortality predominates. (I.ii.40ff)

further recalls the northern Renaissance of such as Montaigne (e.g. *Essais* 2.12, "Apologie de Raimond Sébond"). We find the same poor forked animal in Pope (following Pascal):

Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state . . .
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast. . . .
Created half to rise, half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!
(*Essay on Man* 2.3-18)

There is a poignancy in the speech of the Abbot in act three of *Manfred*, a real sense of the despair of what man should, but cannot ever be, a picture of an irredeemably befouled creation. The Abbot speaks here only of Manfred, but Byron surely speaks here of Man:

This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos--Light and Darkness--
And mind and dust--and passions and pure thoughts
Mixed and contending without end or order,--
All dormant or destructive. (III.i.160ff)

There were those of this age who, in defense of hope, would seek to make a virtue

¹⁷¹"Heaven, in creating us, made our life a blend / Of desires, of loathing, of reason, of madness, / Of moments of pleasure and days of torment, / Of our imperfect being these are the elements . . ." (*Discours en vers sur l'homme*, 1738, Premire Discours, 161ff).

of this confusion of contrarieties--including Keats, Blake, and the German dialectical philosophers--but Byron sought no resolutions; he certainly was not going to chase into metaphysics for them. A satirist, after all, must be a pessimist, and the greatest satirists--Voltaire, Swift, Byron--were the greatest pessimists. *Candide* concludes with the revelation that men are born to suffer under "trois grand maux, l'ennui, le vice, et le besoin."¹⁷²

Each Romantic poet in turn retired from the real or pretended advocacy of the betterment of mankind (except Byron, spared the exalted hopes for man of starry-eyed youth, suffered not the strong reaction of disappointment and could retain his modest aristocratic liberalism to the end). Keats joined Coleridge briefly in the vexed question of man's status under a supposedly providential heaven, man the unwilling puppet of divine causation, but facing eternal judgement nonetheless, helpless under a purposeless universe where freewill, even if true, has no meaning. He rightly sees this as the central issue of *King Lear*, offering the pregnant phrase: "the fierce dispute / Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay" ("Upon Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again," Jan 1818).

As the youngest of this group, Keats could not help but have been affected by the struggles that went before. He had come openly to question hope even with *Endymion*, a poem of affirmation and reassurance, barely off the press. He writes to Reynolds in answer to his young friend's expressed fear that life was naught but pain and loss: "you seem to have been going through with a more painful and acute zest the same labyrinth that I have--I have come to the same conclusion thus far" (3 May 1818). This was the labyrinth of passages out of the Chamber of Maiden Thought. Wordsworth, his mentor, had seemed to arrive out of the shadows with a despairing picture of man (see *Excursion* 5.494ff and 4.324ff). Keats' strongest expression of the earthly dilemma comes in "Written upon the Top of Ben Nevis" (Aug 1818):

Read me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud
Upon the top of Nevis, blind in mist!

¹⁷² three great maladies: boredom, vice, and want" ("Conclusion," 233).

I look into the chasms, and a shroud
Vaporous doth hide them,--just so much I wist
Mankind do know of hell; I look o'erhead,
And there is sullen mist,--even so much
Mankind can tell of heaven; mist is spread
Before the earth, beneath me,--even such,
Even so vague is man's sight of himself!

It is a world lacking the empirical certainty of the Enlightenment and the religious certainty which that had replaced. Modern, Romantic man knows only the "self": "Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet,-- / This much I know that, a poor witless elf, / I tread on them. . . ." Knowledge remains mired in the perceptions, in the self. Surely not the sublime divinely creative self of the German idealists, but a blind, inadequate, even lesser than self, an "elf."

VI.A.2.c Vacant Hopes

From the fiery optimism of *Queen Mab* (1812), shouted perhaps too loudly for us to believe in its depth, Shelley descends through the sense of loss in poems like "Stanzas.--April, 1814," to *Alastor*, which was his *Endymion*, his exploration of possibility. But, unlike *Endymion*, Shelley finishes in an unlightened gloom of a revelation that will not be: the sky grows "utterly black," with "hope but a torturer" (640), "a dream / Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever, / Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now" (669ff). Mary reminds us in her note to the poem that all was not extinguished: "A very few years, with all their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley's hopes, though he still thought them well grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve."

These hopes spilled out as *The Revolt of Islam* (summer 1817), yet the sober final stanzas show him no more able than in *Alastor* to belie his own doubts into

a facile didactic optimism in the manner of Wordsworth.¹⁷³ "Mutability (We are as clouds)" (1816) employs the Wordsworthian metaphor to tie us inescapably to transience and mortality. Poems of the Geneva summer continue this theme, stressing the fog of perceptions behind which we are imprisoned. "On Death" confirms the idealist conclusion against certain knowledge by either the senses or feelings (one a "nurse" and the other a "mother," the most trustworthy of guides but still estranged from us, from certainty). He laments for man "the billows of cloud that around thee roll," precisely as Keats did atop Ben Nevis.

"Mont Blanc" (Jul 1816), of that summer, introduces the sense of a vacant wasteland as metaphor for the separated life on earth, the landscape of Keats' pale knight, and one to reappear as a sea of troubles in "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" (Oct 1818). He holds out for the hope that there remain islands of revelation, the possibility of occasional "visitings," though all life else be desolation. In "Mont Blanc," this "vacancy" he tries to deny, though the cold and distant Absolute offers scant encouragement. The contemporaneous "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" evokes "This dim vast vale of tears" (17), linking it to these two other poems with that chilling adjective "vacant," a quality, hostile to gregarious man, shared equally by desert and ocean (the lonely and "lifeless sea" of the "Ancient Mariner"). "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" turns the attention from the Absolute (where Neo-Platonism insisted it should remain) to separated man. From the first he insists we accept life as "the deep wide sea of Misery" in which the "green" isles of revelation themselves seem only to exist because of the need of the "mariner, worn and wan" for his hope to have substance.¹⁷⁴ This is Kant and Coleridge again--if hope exists, so must its object. Three times Shelley reminds us that "many flowering islands lie / In the waters of wide Agony" (1ff, 66-67, 335-36), insistence as ever concealing doubt. Yet he has descended very far from perfectibility, even modest social hopes. And

¹⁷³A real sense of loss, of the futility, even Byronic maliciousness of hope had colored the Wordsworthian redemptive suffering at the end of "The Ruined Cottage." But when the story reappears in *The Excursion*, this "torturing hope" (1.913) is quickly followed by a passage redolent of Christian suppliance and "consolation" (1.934-39). See also 5.634 and surrounding text.

¹⁷⁴This wan mariner has the strongest kinship with, is almost a synthesis of Keats' pale knight and Coleridge's ancient mariner.

overstressing the pain and vacancy to enhance the revelation is foolishly adding nails to a bed in which he will find himself soon forced to lie. In "Julian and Maddalo," the Euganean Hills seemed such islands as seen from Venice (77-79) and now Venice is one such as seen from the other side. Moments or states of revelation¹⁷⁵ always lie afar and obscured by mists. Separateness is the despair of ever truly knowing them, much less achieving permanent anchorage. Byron, always thoughtlessly bold, strides ashore on *The Island*, almost in conscious defiance of Shelleyan futile earnestness, and proceeds to describe a paradise. Perhaps to demonstrate that it could be done.

Keats' decline of hope, much more rapid, appears in clear progression in the fates of the male protagonists of the major poems of 1819. From the ultimate success of Endymion, his elevation to the aether, we see a more sober, more skeptical Keats behind the flight of the lovers of "The Eve of St. Agnes" into the night and, like Lear, under the storm. They flee into the dark labyrinth that lies beyond the Chamber of Maiden Thought. Endymion's fate was divine, theirs only the mortal life of pain mixed with pleasure.

From "The Eve of St. Agnes," another three months brings the knight of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (Apr 1819), who, though suffering the same fall as Endymion, is not only not subsequently elevated, he cannot even return to the human life of pain and pleasure mixed of Porphyro and Madeline. He is condemned to a life of numbed hopelessness, a death-in-life, an eternal estrangement from all that makes life worthwhile (to Keats at least): sensations. He has descended into the Cave of Quietude and remained there.

True, there are indications that Keats might not have intended in this poem so dark a vision. The episode in *Faerie Queene* from which this seems to have been taken (book two) does not so doom the knight; he laments for awhile, then carries on. Keats resurrects this possibility in a revision of the final stanza, where a word of uncompromising finality, "wither," becomes one implying a temporary state,

¹⁷⁵and we are, of course, talking about Wordsworthian "spots of time," but as enduring states of consciousness more than just the reverberations of experience in the building of virtue.

"sojourn." But I am led to believe that it is the knight himself, being human and thus needing hope, who believes that he only sojourns in this place. The poet gives every sense that the luckless wight has become another of the "pale kings and princes too, / Pale warriors, death-pale were they all" (stanza ten). This avalanche of "pale" cannot but be meant to overwhelm the knight, himself described in the first and last stanzas as "palely loitering." He shares with the legion of the death-pale the condition of death-in-life presented to us in *Moneta*. He has surely embraced sleep or death: the fact that the "squirrel's granary is full, / And the harvest's done" tells us specifically that we are beyond the stasis of "To Autumn," that the time of sensual satiety has past. Indeed, again our hero had feasted, literally, on "roots of relish sweet, / And honey wild, and manna dew," and emotionally, on her love and beauty, "I set her on my pacing steed, / And nothing else saw all day long. . . ." The "pacing" steed repeats the impatient, restless movement in stasis of the circling swallows of "To Autumn." And surely, as we know he must, having feasted "all day long" on her beauty, he then sleeps. The knight awakes to find not the lady in his arms, not transcendence, but he "wakes to weep." No longer can Keats believe that despair carries within it its synthesis, joy; separateness does not border on joy but is irrevocable. If the knight believes he only sojourns, he is either cruelly deceived, or he recognizes that he is rescued from this vale of tears only in extinction of real death.

With the declining fortunes of his male protagonists, each carrying the hopes of the poet, went the "philosophy," the desired synthesis, which sustained them. The heartwood of this story lies in the progressive treatment of this attempted unity in the great odes of the spring and summer of 1819. I will not presume to speculate on the actual sequence of composition of these odes, beyond sharing the belief of Sperry that the "Ode to Psyche" came first, in April, and that the "Ode to Autumn," was composed last, no earlier than late summer. I will, however, deal briefly with the odes in a sequence of increasing separateness, for they fall easily into line. Whether this may be taken as evidence for chronology may be too simplistic, but at least opens up the possibility.

In "The Ode to Psyche" (Apr 1819), the imagination still has power, but it is much diminished. It rules over a small patch of cultivated Nature, Nature conceived through the imagination, into which the poet retires. He will pass out of

the Chamber of Maiden Thought; the juvenile mind, the haven of "moss-lain Dryads," be "lull'd to sleep," and a more mature mind will arise. In this less beautiful, less hopeful reality, the more active mind, "the gardener Fancy,"¹⁷⁶ will tame a small part of the world of pains and pleasures mixed, cleave out a garden among the "dark-cluster'd trees" and "wild-ridged mountains." This sort of active, shaping, idealist's mind is a departure for Keats, a suspension of Negative Capability, and suggests him grasping for what he so eloquently describes here, for a means of retaining something of the spiritualizing imagination while faced with a mortal reality where this is looking increasingly impossible. He seems willing to make a pact with idealism if it would leave him at least a small plot from which the forces of dissolution would be kept at bay. So his once selfless, receptive mind, becomes a striving "working brain," not passive to Nature, but "breeding flowers" and training a "wreath'd trellis," creating a "rosy sanctuary."

Like Voltaire, and Bacon before him, the world has proven too hostile, too intractable to allow the imaginative mind the triumph of its vision (whatever it may be), so the visionary retires to tending his garden, and letting the imagination have what freedom it may within the confined garden walls. Beyond, the glowering mountains and dark forests remain, overlooking his vulnerable plot of still hopeful earthly happiness. The flight of the poet into his imagination had always been with Keats (recall the sonnet on the release of Hunt from prison) but it had always been an ascension, a permanent lodging, at least ready refuge, of the truly poetic imagination. Now it is Keats imprisoned by the vertical bars of dark pines crowding around him, cornered by stalking black mountains of hostile (rather than Wordsworth's maternal and chastising) sorrows and random lightning flashes of circumstance. Now the same flight of the imagination is but a retreat into itself, with lowered expectations, under the storm, beneath the mountains.

"Ode to Psyche" opens with a question--"Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see"--and questioning is an act of a conscious, rational mind, of one not passive or receptive, one outside the imaginative vision. "Ode to a Nightingale" closes with

¹⁷⁶He was not much concerned with Coleridge's distinction of the imagination from the fancy.

the same question: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?" In the first case, the poet-narrator stands outside and steps into the poem, looking for the possibility of permanence. The possibility, therefore, still exists at this point (in that he is looking), and the poem ends with a sort of compromise synthesis, a much limited communication with eternity, a tenuous garden perhaps, but still an extant one. The latter poem has him inside the experience nearly from the beginning of the poem, only to step out at the end, to return to the rational, particularizing, mortal world. This is a much stronger statement of separateness, more like a fall, more like being kicked out of heaven, like Endymion, but not being allowed back in, like Adam and his descendants. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," he likewise falls out of the scene, out of the attempted merger with the immortal entities in the poem, but he returns to earth with not only a lesson, but an actual message from the other side. In "Ode to Autumn," he stands entirely outside, with hands full of the rich materials of harvest, attempting to mold his own Grecian urn.

The "Ode to a Nightingale" opens with him already moving into the Cave of Quietude, from self-awareness, "My heart aches," toward a deeper satiety of pain, "a drowsy numbness pains / My sense. . . ." The revelatory state lies before him: the thoughtless expression of eternal beauty and truth, the nightingale, who "Singest of summer in full-throated ease." But Wordsworthian separateness ultimately becomes evident, "I have ears in vain-- / To thy high requiem become a sod." That is, instead of an awakening and rebirth, as the characters in every poem, even "St. Agnes," had enjoyed, he remains of the earth. He remains, in fact, in the earth, like the knight, in a sort of living death, without a reawakening, that is, "a sod." The bird no longer sings his morning chorus, announcing his resurrection, but sings his requiem. "Adieu! adieu," he calls back, and ends the poem with a return to the mortal world. He returns with the knowledge that the question of whether man may unite with the eternal no longer matters; instead, man can only be satisfied, may only find growth, in the mixture of joy and grief of this world. It is not that we are expressly denied a world of immortality and unmixed pleasure, but that we could never live there, that we are not for that world, but are made for the land of storms.

As "Ode to a Nightingale" looks at the union of mortal man with eternity as promised by Nature, so "Ode on a Grecian Urn" investigates the same promise as made by art. The urn achieves, pictorially, the state of revelation, immortalizing the moment of sensuality and numbness that both defines the Cave of Quietude and the revelation that it dialectically implies. It is the moment that Endymion had, then lost in his fall, before recovering again; that Madeline, in "St. Agnes," knew in a haze of half waking and half sleep, lost, then regained in a limited way; that the knight in "La Belle Dame" had, then lost; that the narrator in "Ode to a Nightingale" sought but could not grasp; that Keats seeks to create and hold in "To Autumn," but never has. The manner of the loss in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" I have discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

If each ode brings him further into the hopelessness of irredeemable separateness, then the "Ode on Indolence" (May 1819) must be the final farewell, and the ode "To Autumn" (Sept 1819) the epitaph. He says farewell to any direct communion with the three first passions of his life: Love, Ambition, and Poetry:

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu . . .
 Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
 In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
 Farewell! I yet have vision for the night,
 And for the day faint visions there is store;
 Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
 Into the clouds, and never more return!

He sends the figures back to the frieze on the Grecian urn, back into art, an enduring world now known to be closed to him. It is a bit of bravado *masking a dreadful*^{loss} the "adieu" repeat^{ing} the difficult and exaggerated farewell of "Ode to a Nightingale."

Barely a month or so later, *Lamia* (Jun-Aug 1819) looks back on former hope as it would a foreign world, like the mocking eye of the modern world peering back from its dark and purposeless age of disbelief to the naive hopes of the nineteenth century. Lycius suffers the same fall as Endymion and the knight, but where the knight's death-in-life was at least a life of sorts, the fall literally kills Lycius. *Lamia* dismisses the hopeful question of mortal man in "The Ode to Psyche" and "Ode to a Nightingale"--"Do I wake or sleep?"--with an answer cynical and exclusory: "Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass / Their

pleasures in a long immortal dream" (1.127-28). The revelations of gods mock the confused waking nightmares of men.

Keats had descended now as far as he could; as he wrote this final major work, he surely knew he was destined soon to follow Tom into the grave. It is difficult to see where Keats would have gone in his poetry had he lived. I wonder if he might not simply have endured, in a dreary pedestrian way through a diminished world, like Lear and Gloucester, and Wordsworth.

VI.A.2.d The Tyrannous Heart

There are two sorts of separateness presented in *Lamia*: the poet barred from immortality, from all real commerce with eternity, and the heart ever estranged from the mind. For both Keats returns again to the Fall, less an allegory than a real and painful loss. If a prelapsarian world is defined by perfect freedom in obedience, that is, by perfect morality, it existed prior to any need for choice, motive, even will. Shelley makes this point in "The Witch of Atlas":

Before those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the Earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime. . . .
(49-52)

In *Paradiso* XXI, Dante places Saturn in the sphere of "The Contemplative Souls," those who lived lives of quiet meditation. A common theme of both Hebrew and classical millenarianism is of a past Golden Age characterized by harmony, not dialectic. The perfect dialectic, truth and error cannot exist without each other, and thus, the very presence of either reminds us of our curse.

At the end of act three of *Prometheus Unbound*, Life and Love are again united (in the personages of Prometheus and Asia) out of time and space, benignity again rules and men will know necessarily the realization of their hopes. Potential again becomes actuality, for once Mind has opened itself to the ministry of Love (as Christians ask that the heart be opened), then roused Necessity assumes control. Evil then retires from actuality into potential. Yet though Prometheus, as a dramatic character finds the eternity with Asia that Byron's

lovers in *The Island* seem to approach, and as a symbol suggests this possibility for mankind, Shelley cannot offer so trite a conclusion as Byron (who clearly didn't believe it enough to worry about reconciling it with reality). With the end of the action in act three, as with the end of celebrations in act four, we are delivered of a caveat:

the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
Passionless?--no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.
(*PU* III.iv.193ff)

Still, immortality and perfectibility denied, Shelley's millennium remains hardly less ferociously optimistic than in *Queen Mab*, and even more real than *The Revolt of Islam* which never left allegory for this sort of indicative. Yet, upon reading Shelley's contemporary private verse, as a monument to faith, *Prometheus Unbound* seems to rise more precipitously from its surrounding sea of doubts and separateness, more distant and didactic than those others. Even the favored poet, the legislator-priest, begins slipping into the general wretchedness after 1816, as he does with the other Romantics. "'if we were not weak / Should we be less in deed than in desire?' / 'Ay, if we were not weak--and we aspire / How vainly to be strong!'" ("Julian and Maddalo" 175ff). He attempts to force a revelation of the imagination at the close both of *Epipsychidion* and "Ode to the West Wind," but where Keats expires on the steps, Shelley batters with only rhetorical passion. His overacting has no real power.

Man suffering under "chance . . . death, and mutability," is man suffering an innate restless striving. As Keats writes to Bailey:

The best of Men have but a portion of good in them--a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames, which creates the ferment of existence--by which a Man is propelled to act, and strive, and buffet with Circumstance. (23 Jan 1818)

If random circumstance itself did not make perfection impossible in this life, then our impulsion to "buffet" with it would. This describes an inborn unease; something material and organic to our natures (akin to the seemingly *ex nihilo* action of yeast), which is entirely different from the impatience coming from knowledge of better things. This restlessness, which even Locke admitted to be innate, Keats affirms as universal. The other sort of restlessness, the intellectual dissatisfaction that comes from expanded horizons, inhabits only the best of men, is a consequence of education as well as the poetic imagination. He spends some time elaborating on this to James Rice:

What a happy thing it would be if we could settle our thoughts and make our minds up on any matter in five minutes, and remain content--that is, build a sort of mental cottage of feelings, quiet and pleasant-- to have a sort of Philosophical back-garden, and cheerful holiday-keeping front one-- but alas! this never can be: for as the material cottager knows there are such places as France and Italy, and the Andes and burning mountains, so the spiritual Cottager has knowledge of the terra semi-incognita of things unearthly, and cannot for his life keep in the check-rein. . . . (24 Mar 1818)

From his reading in Robertson's *The History of America*, Keats decides against Rousseau, concluding "that Man is originally a poor forked creature subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest, destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind or other" (ltr. to George and Georgiana, 28 April 1819). Again the key is "mischances," the randomness that Keats could not help but see, the denial of destiny and Providence. And while civilization advances, the lot of man does not: "If he improves by degrees his bodily accommodations and comforts--at each stage, at each ascent there are waiting for him a fresh set of annoyances. . . ." Try as he will to advance himself, to approach the ideal, he yet suffers his mortality. Keats shares with Coleridge the belief that progress in human happiness is like approaching a goal at an infinite distance; man may persevere as he will, still "he is mortal, and there is still a heaven with its Stars above his head." And the stars mock him with their brightness, steadfastness, and infinite distance.

The tug of desires, be they of restlessness or of the passions of the heart, again we need to distinguish from the inner impulsions of higher purpose which were

divine. Keats' example of man like a stoat, his eyes bright with purpose, relates to the striving of the self for fulfillment, not with passing appetite. *Faust* illustrates the error. In Auerbach's Tavern, Mephistopheles toasts: "Ich tränke gern ein Glas, die Freiheit hoch zu ehren . . ." ¹⁷⁷ and as they observe the students in a frenzy of drinking, he chortles: "Das Volk is frei, seht an, wie wohl's ihm geht!" ¹⁷⁸ It is "bestial" of course, but then that is the idea. Neither he nor Faust understood the difference between our inner principles, whose obedience is liberty, and our enslaving passions.

Though Byron would have had it otherwise--Rousseau honestly, if briefly, charmed him--instead of an ally of freedom, his heart more often becomes yet another despot. Sexual licence, he concludes in a moment of his periodic swings of resolution, results from the heart as a disguised serpent, one to be controlled by selective abstinence: "the worst is, the devil always came with it,--till I starve him out,--and I will *not* be slave of *any* appetite" (Journal, 17 Nov 1813). Turning it into a tyrant allows him to spout defiance, but he also knew how futile were such resolutions: "If I do err, it shall be my heart, at least, that heralds the way." Giving his impulses teleology shifts from him the blame.

The tyrannous heart may be seen as simply perverse, as Conrad complained: "How strange that heart, to me so tender still, / Should war with Nature and its better will" (*Corsair* 396-97). It is autonomous of his volition, and seemingly of outer Nature as well. Typically, however, it acts in a manner explicable by and often harmonious with external Fate. He tells us in *Childe Harold* how his erratic and passionate nature arose from lack of proper guidance as a youth (presumably before his age of reason): "untaught in youth my heart to tame, / My springs of life were poisoned. 'Tis too late!" (III.vii). We have seen that Cain was born, like Byron generally saw himself, with a rebellious nature. Novalis, in his *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802, Book II), tells of how the tyranny of Fate includes our innate character. We are slaves of the passions which arise from disposition, passions we have not chosen and cannot control. This is important justification for

¹⁷⁷I'd gladly raise my glass to freedom, let it clink . . ." (1.2244).

¹⁷⁸"Free men, you see, at play in nature's state!" (1.2295).

the gothic sublime. He makes the connection between Fate ("Schicksal") and disposition or soul ("Gemut").

Annabella wrote Byron urging a somewhat philosophical, Enlightenment approach to achieving disinterestedness. Byron, as much as he valued the goal, denied that any dispassionate approach, any system at all (recall his comment to Hunt on systems) was possible with man:

You have said a good deal . . . on the subject of Benevolence
systematically exerted--two lines of Pope will explain mine (if I
have any) and that of half mankind--

'Perhaps Prosperity becalmed his breast
'Perhaps the Wind just shifted from ye. East.

(ltr., 6 Sept 1813)

There can be no secular "millennium," no perfectibility, no certainty of progress, because men like Byron (not "half mankind," but virtually all) lack efficacious or consistent control over their emotions or affections. And since these determine actions, as Hume had said and Byron agreed, men have no freewill: "Most men are slaves, none more so than the great, / To their own whims and passions, and what not . . ." (*DJ* V.xxv).

Thus did this characteristic of human nature, being central to his *Weltanschauung*, dominate his poetic creations. Of course, there is sufficient precedence in literary convention for the passive, victimized hero to give him models external to himself. Eighteenth-century psychologies based on Locke and Rousseau, mixed with well-meaning attempts at a scientific study and plain wishful thinking, conspired to present a literary type defined by natural innocence, the unsophisticated being, unspoiled by civilization, what Thorslev calls "The Child of Nature" (29ff). (The figure has roots even deeper in the pastoral tradition.) Even more to the point, such a character has long been a popular satiric type, an excellent soft template on which the more grotesque realities of the world about him might be clearly impressed. Such was Alonso Quijano, as the knight Don Quixote; such were Tom Jones and Candide. Thorslev (*The Byronic Hero* 31-33) offers the hero, Belcour (i.e. "good heart"), of the very popular West End play, *The West Indian* (1771) by Richard Cumberland. In his

very opening scene, Belcour prepares us for a rough roller coaster of circumstances and consequences, exciting to the audience (so the author hopes) precisely because the actions of the hero will not be calculated, reasonable, and prudent, precisely because, that is, he has a dominant heart and no freewill. We, the audience, are reassured of this by his early line, "my passions are my masters; they take me where they will" (I.v). Another example is the eponymous hero of Robert Bage's *Herm sprong, or Man as He Is Not* who explains a spontaneous act of benevolence with: "It was an impulse, and it was irresistible." Byron leaves us in no doubt about Don Juan either, the name itself titillating the readers on with promises of a man ruled by passions. Depending on the philosophical position of the author, a character may have acquired his ineradicable innocent goodness from an innate moral sense or from a benign natural environment (e.g. Crusoe's Friday, Herm sprong, Godwin's Fleetwood, or even Wordsworth's Cumbrians). So far as satire is concerned, its needs are met either way.

Of Byron's other hero, the "Byronic" hero, the will which stands in defiance to the tyranny of Fate also arises from the fated passions, itself unwilled, unsought. Manfred confesses to the Abbot that his inability to command men comes from an inability to command himself: "I could not tame my nature down; for he / Must serve who fain would sway" (III.i.116, Apr 1817). His pride makes him a solitary, makes him defy the very forces that manipulate him to his defiance. Manfred may not have made this connection, the way the Byron did in *Don Juan* ("I was born for opposition"), but he knew he was fully fated. The Abbot confirms with a second opinion (III.i.160-66, quoted above). So too Mazeppa; he exerted iron authority over thousands, "But could not o'er myself evince / The like control" (293-94), for "all men are not born to reign / . . . o'er their passions" (287-88). Byron vacillates over to what extent the tyranny of the passions was generally universal or restricted to the great wills. It seems that the heroic few have suffered from correspondingly towering passions, but the rule of the heart in general, he seemed to view as common to all (allowing him an occasional barb at "philosophical" men as being unnaturally passionless).

Less heroic but more human and moral, Sardanapalus was no less or more the pawn of his heart: "I am the very slave of Circumstance / And Impulse--borne away with every breath!" (IV.i.330-31). Fate makes a rare appearance in both

guises in a single reference: as external cause, "Circumstance," and internal feeling, "Impulse." Ironically, Sardanapalus suffers so despite a life's work of intentionally avoiding obvious constraints on freedom of the will: "and I hated / All that looked like a chain for me or others" (339-40). Byron clearly speaks personally, a slave despite imagined heroic efforts for freedom. Sardanapalus shows himself in IV.i. again very like Byron, the victim of the tenor of the moment, as each of the two women most beloved to him come in turn to sway his resolution. Each fills his heart when she is alone with him, each becoming for those few minutes the most important motive of the Emperor's feelings. Byron's weakness on this score, making the woman he was with think she was all that mattered in his life (because for those minutes, in spite of himself, she was), he well knew and lamented. When Sardanapalus reiterates his strict prohibition against allowing Zarina to see him, granting her almost anything but that, we recall Byron's similar insistence concerning Caroline Lamb and Annabella after the separation. He knew he could not control himself and would be controlled by others, and knew enough to try and avoid in advance such collapses of will.

As the objects of poetry, on the other hand, in the satires and dramas, he concerns himself satirically or heroically with the entire range of human emotion. Heroic themes cover pride, defiant anger, love, regret, and despair, and satiric attention goes to lust, love, greed, aggression, and other self-interests. All, I barely need to say, are equally determined, equally unwilled, though Byron may ascribe to some at times an earthly cause as his didactic needs dictate (as he blames society and corrupt monarchy, for instance, for the rapacious violence of the soldiers in the siege of Ismail).

We have seen how memory allies with the passions to bring ruinous justice to Byron where they had independently served most other Romantic poets as wings for transcendence. The religion of the heart had followed the urgings of Rousseau and the counter-Enlightenment of sentiment and Nature to look to the inner man for salvation from the corruption that modern man had seemed to become. Overthrowing the old answer to man's yearnings, religion, and the traditional secular alternative to it, philosophy, Byron followed the Romantic movement into the heart. He found there a "vortex" which both cannot be denied and cannot be endured, that which must be trusted though known to betray, oneself the greatest

tyrant. The voice intoning over Manfred's unconscious body speaks what he already knows and what the author implies is true of us all. Fate, the abuses of life, may inflict on us "every poison known," yet still "the strongest was thine own. . . . Thyself to be thy proper Hell!" (I.240-51).

Idealism may lead us to the comforting conclusion that evil is but an illusion (if we are foolish or needful enough of hope to follow skepticism into idealism and stop). So Jupiter becomes at least the consequence of Prometheus divided against himself, if separate at least subject to inner acceptance or exclusion. *Prometheus Unbound* I.262 presents us with the "Phantasm" of Prometheus' own tyrannous potential over his own better nature, a mirror of himself cursing, whereupon he immediately recants. The curse itself strongly suggests King Lear's curse of the heavens and we are brought to see the issue of divided nature, both sufferers estranged from inner nature and outer Nature, those in alliance, even unity, against him: "Rain then thy plagues upon me here, / Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear; / And let alternate frost and fire / Eat into me . . ." (266ff). This alliance of inner and outer corruption, the result of a want of inner harmony, Shelley must bring to restoration: "the hour / Come, when thou must appear to be / That which thou art internally" (297ff), a congruity of intention and consequence defining a millennium or a hell, depending on your view of inner man.

VI.B The Consequences

VI.B.1 Guilt and the Hostile Universe

Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills,
The generations are prepared; the pangs,
The internal pangs, are ready; the dread strife
Of poor humanity's afflicted will
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.
(*Excursion* 6.553ff)

Though the Solitary's words here express only a pessimistic part of Wordsworth's mind, all of Keats was edging in this Byronic direction (see ltr. to Bailey, 23 Jan 1818, qtd. above). Although Keats had tried to comprehend the dialectic of life as productive (a "ferment") only when pleasure allied with pain, as Wordsworth had done through his associationism, it left him no greater optimist. The teleology behind our pains ("are prepared"), the inner Necessity preparing us for misery, for futile struggles, is similar and Byronic.

They differ from Byron, however, not only in the extent and consistency of the universe's hostility, but in man's culpability beneath it. Individual sin seems one gulf between the classical and the Romantic mind. In Wordsworth, guilt appears early and prominently in *Guilt and Sorrow*, but it is guilt in an Enlightenment sense: as a chastisement of the moral sense, working more or less mechanically in the associative process where pleasures and pains teach virtue. Guilt is suggested in the major "spots of time" of the 1799 *Prelude*, and again the incidents work as ministers of pain teaching virtue. In these, as in "Nutting," there exists an additional religious overtone of culpability and supernatural redemption. But Wordsworth was raised in secular Enlightenment ethics and appearances of guilt with this religious implication (a focus on individual culpability, as in Coleridge and Byron) vanishes from his later works. His more consistent attitude reflected the secular mind's distress over separateness only as duality confirmed, as the impossibility of a hoped-for transcendence. Shelley, in his idealistic monism (which collapses), is most like him in relative guiltlessness; Keats also, and these three stand much closer to Enlightenment morality than the two more entangled in the Christian web. Coleridge and Byron trade heavily on guilt because their

ethos is unshakably Christian. Separateness becomes the child forcibly denied his mother; the child can only feel that he is somehow at fault, is being punished. Guilt roots out of religious soil, a personal religion unlike the Neo-Stoicism of the Enlightenment. Perhaps Byron's attraction to the Roman Stoic as hero and to Enlightenment values and literary forms was a longing for just this certainty.

The sufferings of Io, especially, warn of the dangers of mortal attempts to partake in transcendence. Hers was not even hubris, she attempted to avoid Zeus, was beguiled anyway, and sent to eternal punishment by Hera. The lesson is clear--"let no one working with her hands aspire / to marriage with those lifted high . . ." (Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 891-92)--but her culpability is not. Her case is an example, as is that of Oedipus, of culpability decoupled from responsibility; that one may be responsible for an act, that is, that they did perform it, but have acted in a manner which cannot rationally be blamed, as when they acted in ignorance or under irresistible Necessity. The Greek drama was making just this point about rationality, that the operations of Fate and the heavens are not rational, must not be presumed predictable, but that these powers are to be respected and propitiated all the more because of it. Aeschylus and Sophocles were confirming a moral order in the universe--infidelity, hubris, and murder are all punished--while explaining the obvious injustices in the world (to include the fickle weather) by means of gods whose concerns for justice among themselves supersedes that desired by man. The God of the Hebrews and generally of Christianity, on the other hand, was not granted a justice separate from man and when the people suffered they had either to deduce that they were guilty of something or that God was working for their good in some temporarily inexplicable way.¹⁷⁹ The Hebrews, that is to say, did not generally accept culpability without responsibility; if calamity struck, they had done something to deserve it. Christianity amended this with a tincture of Stoic pessimism, which needed a better explanation for the corruption and woe of the world. From here the doctrine of original sin became stressed in Christianity, and with it came the

¹⁷⁹The difference may be seen in the way Byron, despite his respect for Pope, could not refer to the line "All partial evil's universal Good" from *Essay on Man* with anything but mocking jest. See letter to Murray, 18 Aug 1814.

Greek decoupling of blame from act. Men were to be made to suffer for ancestral sin.

Byron haphazardly uses both traditions, though he wars more with Christianity for obvious Romantic reasons. In the picaresques, the necessitated pathway of vice supplies the moral anchor. It does so, however, more from the literary needs of the adventure genre, like tragedy, simultaneously to threaten and affirm the moral universe. Guilt here remains, again as in tragedy, in fine balance between its just cause and its unjust severity. For personal reasons, Byron keeps it sublime, unnamed,¹⁸⁰ though few other purveyors of popular guilt of the age did so. Byron in his postexile moralizing mostly dropped this device of nameless but real guilt (but for that half-anachronism, *Manfred*).¹⁸¹ Instead, we have *Cain*, where Byron moves the crime to center stage, allowing him to show Cain's character as fully formed before the crime, the crime an effect not a cause. This directly accepts the necessitarian, Godwinian argument that the criminal is determined to his crime, and fulfills precisely the dire fears of the anti-Godwinians, such as Wordsworth in *The Borderers* and Coleridge, of the ethical chaos that would result from such a conclusion. No philosopher, Byron arrived here mostly so that he could ease the demon of personal guilt by affirming his own sins as the result of *a priori* guilt, restlessness, and depression. In *Cain* and thereafter, he manages to clarify what the Turkish tales, for technical and readership reasons, had left obscure: the essential and purposeful injustice of the universe. If it seems trite to our post-Byronic ears (and the basic message retains its power in modern, at least mid twentieth century, drama), it was of the utmost, heart-wrenching importance to those presiders over the Western intellectual's farewell to Christianity.

Popular literature of the age, in addition, had already taken the gothic sublime to strain morality in the universe to the limit (at times, as in "Monk" Lewis and William Beckford, past it). Ever greater sensationalizing, the search for shock

¹⁸⁰Only in *The Giaour* does it come overtly into the story.

¹⁸¹Among the histories, only in *Werner* is the protagonist fleeing his past ("a father's wrath" and an "o'er-fervent youth"), and Byron had borrowed this story and, more importantly, had begun it back in pre-exile 1815.

value, had brought literature close to the amoral universe even before Byron himself flirted with its limits in the Turkish tales. *Manfred* was the open destruction of the boundaries. The morality of postexile Byron meant a greater sensitivity to justice from a humanist point of view; but it required, ironically, that the divine powers be revealed as amoral or immoral.¹⁸²

Both Keats and Byron conceived of the hostile universe as one ruled by "Circumstance."¹⁸³ Wordsworth spoke of the "random darts of circumstance," the purposeless universe that so terrified Coleridge, but I have hoped to show already that randomness existed only from the point of view of the sufferer. Even Plato's Necessity, identified with chaos, was teleological and as such could not be random. Plato considered events without a positive moral purpose, wanting harmony with the ideal, as "random" or chaotic, not using these terms in the sense of causeless events, which few commentators of any age have ever allowed, nor even solely in the modern scientific sense of unpredictable events, though this was a part of it. The dreadful fear of Wordsworth and Coleridge was of a universe lacking in moral purpose, events without a benign guiding hand, be it Christian or pantheist, providential or Newtonian deism. Keats inherited the Wordsworthian battle on this front already lost, a deteriorating hope which he tried to stem with his blend of imagination and optimism (pain productive of good). This failed and we find him in 1819 facing defeat and separateness, the death-in-life that was sojourning in the land of Byron. (Byron moved on, Keats died instead.) "Circumstance" here suggests more than the absence of benign purpose, or moral order, as in Plato, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. As is clear in Byron, and intermittent in Keats and Shelley, it meant the active purposefulness of a malign power, Circumstance as hostile Providence.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸²A length discussion of the concept of the hostile universe in Byron has been deleted at this point. Much of this was familiar ground in Byronic scholarship, and some will be submitted for publication as a separate article on Fate, culpability, and the personal sufferings of Byron and Coleridge.

¹⁸³See *CH* IV.cxxvi and Keats' ltr. to George and Georgiana, 19 Mar 1819.

¹⁸⁴The seemingly "circumstantial" appearance of the free-living sparrow to Bonivard, for example, serves only as an act of an omnipotent Providence to mock him in his cell.

In Moneta's palace, the fane of the memory of mortality, the "black gates / Were shut against the sunrise evermore" (*The Fall of Hyperion* I.85-86). This is the sunrise from which Wordsworth saw the soul come "trailing clouds of glory," but to which both he and Keats discovered it could not return. A Neo-Platonic merging into undifferentiated unity did not suffice for immortality for most hopefuls, and least of all for Keats, whose soul was intelligence (tempered by identity), and for whom the independence of the sentient imagination mattered above all. So, the soul finds itself trapped in mortality, the horizon blocked from view by the same black gates which thundered to a close behind Milton's disinherited couple¹⁸⁵ wending their way across Shelley's plain of "wide Agony."

"There is no God!" trumpets the Fairy in *Queen Mab* (VII.13), the name of God being a cover for human tyrannies. Later, Ahasuerus counters that there is indeed a God, a vengeful, cruel, blood-lusting despot, the author of all misery. Like Byron, Shelley needed to affirm the existence and power of hostile forces against which to crusade, but unlike Byron, he also could not live without hope that these could be overcome. And as his hoping mattered more than issues of guilt and culpability, the exact nature of the tyrannies mattered less than that they be shown not determining, of immense power but vulnerable. So a figure like Jupiter in *Prometheus Unbound* remains plastic to a variety of references, from the inner evil of the divided self, to political tyrants, to a Manichaean malignity. Prometheus, for Byron, as for Shelley and Aeschylus, stands as a martyr to the hostile universe, benevolence punished by,

inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate. . . .
("Prometheus," 1816, 19ff)

That is, human beings. This sentient evil itself must be culpable for the suffering it inflicts; mechanical Necessity cannot be assigned blame, but a divinity is "deaf" by choice and certainly can.

¹⁸⁵Sperry 321.

Byron reserves his most damning picture of the lot of men on earth for the siege of Ismail episode in *Don Juan*. The deadly misfortune which governs the universe appears in the apparently random mistakes of men. Drew (199) catalogues the ineptitude:

The Turkish palisades were back to front, the river approach was left unfortified, 'the Russian batteries were incomplete . . .,' there was a fault in the first attack, the Cossack cavalry was wiped out, and Koutoussow was rescued by pure chance. When Juan is spoken to in German by General Lascy he nods, incomprehending, and because of this the battle goes on.

Juan and Johnson fight in total ignorance and succeed, "fighting thoughtlessly enough to win" (VIII.xix), another cynical observation about how life is best endured. Byron goes on to excuse himself from criticism of immorality in this nihilistic message, by invoking Solomon, Cervantes, and Chaucer, but he well knows that he presents not the vacancy of a man's soul or the folly of society, not even the Stoic's isolation of the suffering individual, but a universe unremittingly hostile to that lone sufferer. Unlike all previous writers, he offers no gesture toward resurrecting morality, no hope for the reader to take away; "such as they are, such my present tale is" (VII.ii.), he protests. Yet he stops short of the full horror of pointlessness, for there is some comfort in purposeful pain (see discussion in chapter three), and does affirm the temporary respite that is Love (though he ensures that it too betrays us eventually).

Much of what we find in Byron, especially in the later works, may be seen in terms of the conventions of classical tragedy. This makes it no less real to him, for the tragic rise and fall represented a powerful reality for Byron, no mere literary device, but one on which he modeled his perception of his own life both as presented to the public and as believed by himself. Drew traces the ancestral line of the tragic protagonist from Sophocles, through Seneca, through Boccaccio (*De Casibus Illustrium Virorum*), through Chaucer (*Troilus and Criseyde*), through such as John Lydgate, and into the Renaissance. These all share a view of man under a divine justice so resolutely determinist and so severe and remote from natural human ethics, even Christian love, as to suggest unlightened pessimism. The Manichaean strain in Judeo-Christian faith, such as in the story of Job, found congenial the austerities of classical tragedy, the cautionary tale of

the great man brought low by the inexorable wheel of Justice; mixed with (Senecan) Stoicism of rigid determinism, we now punish the protagonist though he was determined in his actions. This only heightened the effect, terror at the unfathomable sublimity of providential forces, but in the hands of a modern unbeliever like Byron, with Fate shorn of God, and with a modern audience expecting some kind of moral affirmation (unlike the Greek audience, who needed only the control of the gods confirmed), it becomes a vehicle for utmost despair.

Outside the dramas, the message is the same. Mazeppa finds himself totally helpless before power, in the grip of a cruel and vengeful tyrant:

His rage, refining on my pain,
Sent me forth to the wilderness,
Bound--naked--bleeding--and alone. . . . (849ff)

The image evoked is Poor Tom under the storm, and the wild ride of Mazeppa almost cries out to be read as allegory of the pain-filled necessitated ride of life itself.

VI.B.2 The Poetic Curse (the inadequacy of our state to our conceptions)

Cain is a proud man--if Lucifer promised him kingdoms &c.--it would *elate* him--the object of the demon is to *depress* him further still in his own estimation . . . by showing him infinite things--& his own abasement--till he falls into the frame of mind--that leads to the Catastrophe--from mere *internal* irritation--*not* premeditation or envy--of *Abel*--(which would have made him contemptible) but from rage and fury against the inadequacy of his state to his Conceptions--& which discharges itself rather against Life--and the author of Life--than the mere living. (ltr. to Murray, 3 Nov 1821)

The curse of the imagination that Keats came to perceive and Shelley to feel, man as dyspeptic Solitary or "impassion'd clay," the lonely "mariner worn and wan," the wanderer in *Alastor*, the poet as oracle or martyr, so much of the Romantic view of the lot of the poet especially, may be summed in that phrase: "the inadequacy of his state to his Conceptions."

The curse of Cain for Byron was this, not the biblical sin. If separateness meant an estrangement from heaven for all of mankind, it meant an alienation from both heaven and earth for the heroic will or the poetic imagination. Byron establishes the lineage of Cain as that of the imaginative, creative, and restless among mankind, giving us Eve, Cain, and Japhet (in *Heaven and Earth*) as if to anchor the beginnings of a lineage, the continuing brotherhood of the sons of Cain. Byron pushes past the tentative gropings of Wordsworth and Keats, through the dark passageways beyond the Cave of Quietude, to emerge in a barren landscape, a wild, untamed land where all natural forces conspire against the lone traveller, his weak will his only ally. He is man, banished now and forced to seek alliance with Satan in defense of his own dignity and freedom. Offering the story of Cain, then, allows Byron to affirm the curse, to establish the predetermination that he had always intimated could explain his own sins (like his brother in self-abuse, Coleridge, to find comfort in a theology).

The "state" of mankind we have just seen in the above discussion. Separateness meant that this Cartesian duality could not be bridged, and that the most spiritual of man, such as Love and his consciousness, remained on the mortal side:

Woe, woe, woe to such communion!
Has not God made a barrier between Earth
And Heaven, and limited each, kind to kind?
(*Heaven and Earth*, Oct 1821, I.iii.474ff)

Noah knew well enough the folly of the aspirations of Anah and Aholibamah in their trysts with the seraphim. It amounted to a wilful disregard of a divinely ordered Creation, a dismemberment of the chain of being, and God acting as Moira would restore the order, and as Nemesis punish such hubris.

Yet the imagination cannot help but see what it has power to see, and cannot help but reach for the objects of its perception. Cain had no real power to refuse Lucifer's offer of a celestial tour, no more than he could avoid being tormented by what he saw there: "things, beyond *my* power, / Beyond all power of my born faculties, / Though inferior still to my desires / And my conceptions" (II.i.80ff). Coleridge knew the same dissatisfaction and suffered even more than Byron for it. Shelley was half driven by it and Keats almost entirely so. Only Wordsworth

wisely, if unhelpfully, reminded us of passiveness and warned against waging "a foolish strife."

Say what he will, Byron remains a closet Calvinist. The poem "Prometheus" could only have been sparked by Shelley; that legend would appeal to Byron only as a metaphor for the poetic curse. He does not approve of the Calvinist ethic against knowledge and human power, but he needs it emotionally, and surely believes it: "Sorrow is Knowledge: they who know the most / Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth-- / The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life" (*Manfred* I.i.10ff). This contrasts with the compromise Keats hoped to effect with Apollo's "Knowledge . . . makes a god of me." Most of all the burden is borne by the poets (all those with greatest imagination). "[T]hey who know the most" are they who see the most, and the poets must suffer the most for their vision.

All knowledge is knowledge of the sort learned by Adam and Eve. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is not just a tree of morality. Any knowledge (as opposed to direct feeling and response to stimulus) begins a process of value judgements. This relates to Rousseau's own view of the Fall of man: that first moment when we began to see ourselves as others see us. Self-knowledge was our first and lasting grief. To see things in relation to each other, which is a definition of knowledge, causes judgements, and judgements require comparisons, and comparisons immediately show us our wretchedness before the glory of heaven. We must learn that we are naked (as Byron's Cain observes to his son). All knowledge brings us to a realization of separateness:

Lucifer. Dids't thou not require
Knowledge? And have I not, in what I showed,
Taught thee to know thyself?
Cain. Alas! I seem
Nothing.

And Lucifer agrees, in a melancholy perversion of Socrates: "And this should be the human sum / Of knowledge" (II.II.418ff).

To be "Nothing" is the fate of all mankind; to know it is the fate of the great or heroic mind (as when Macbeth learned that life "signifieth nothing"); but to feel it, with the vision of what you cannot have ever before you, is the fate of the poet. This is the curse of the imagination:

Lucifer. Was not thy quest for knowledge?
Cain. Yes!--as being
 The road to happiness!
Lucifer. If truth be so,
 Thou hast it.
Cain. Then my father's God did well
 When he prohibited the fatal Tree.
 (II.ii.229ff)

Here Byron again rehearses the Romantic recognition that the Enlightenment abandonment of religion (God is an unnecessary hypothesis, said Laplace) was too hasty. The Socratic "knowledge is virtue" and the Baconian "knowledge is power" ring hollow in the absence of purpose and meaning in life. The Christian antipathy to knowledge seems justified. Byron differed from the others in recognizing that there was no going back to religion. Separateness, the awareness of alienation, could not be unlearned.

Manfred confirms the Fall in a mythological way (being no Christian) with an address to Hyperion, that is, to the sun as a god. This speech to the sun (which Byron thought some of his best writing) may properly be called an address, suggesting its formal, religious tone. That he speaks to a setting sun, itself both deifies the past and stresses our loss. He calls the sun "the idol / Of early nature," "a worship," a "material God! / And representative of the Unknown" (III.ii.3ff). Hence, it is, like Hyperion, a god only, not the "Unknown" Himself, nor a pantheistic part of the whole. As Hyperion (though Byron never names him as such) a link is made to Keats; and when Byron evokes the biblical echo of the mythology of an early race of supreme angelic, though earthly, beings (from the problematic passage opening Genesis VI), he simultaneously raises the Greek Titans as well: "the vigorous race / Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons / Of the embrace of Angels, with a sex / More beautiful" (III.ii.4-7).

Manfred answers his fated powerless inferiority under Teutonic heavens by attempting to reclaim, at least for the heroic individual, the natural equality of man with the spiritual taken from him at the Fall:

when the earth
 Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
 And gave ye no supremacy: I stand
 Upon my strength. . . . (III.iv.117ff)

That is, he stands upon his heroic qualities (and not, significantly, upon an ancient or natural right). The confusion of mythologies continues. Manfred comes essentially as Cain asking back into biblical Paradise, for in Greek mythology mankind never knew the golden age of Titans, and in Norse mythology there was no such age (only isolated heroes).

Manfred stands forth as a true son of Cain. When the Seventh Spirit tells him he is manipulated by "a Power (which is not thine, / And lent thee but to make thee mine)," she speaks specifically of his magic conjuring (I.i.126-27). We may see this, however, (as in *Faust*) as allegory for the poetic imagination, a gift for the elect which comes as a Trojan horse, bearing hidden woe. Like the restless will of the great, the imagination is born in us by Necessity, unwilling, original sin coming through the line of Cain as the still-admonishing hand of Nemesis. We can neither escape nor deny it.

The curse of Cain inflicts another punishment to which I have frequently alluded: a wandering exile. This is the legacy of Io, Ahasuerus, the Ancient Mariner, the Flying Dutchman, and so much that is Romantic and Byronic. Byron himself adopted the role, playing the restless, self-tormented, self-pursued exile, half innate, half assumed, but wholly authentic. In both himself and Napoleon, he opines:

there is a fire
And a motion of the Soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.
(CH III.xlii)

This Nemesis works from within, however he may enumerate in his letters the external impulses driving him to exile. *The Corsair* (Dec 1813) opens with a motto from Tasso: "I suoi pensieri in lui dormir non ponno."¹⁸⁶ That *The Corsair*

¹⁸⁶"His inmost thoughts could never slumber" (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, 10.78.8), though Goffredo's thoughts are restless with anticipation, not pursuing memory.

then launches into a discourse on the joys of freedom in a pirate's life is no contradiction. Byron always distinguished between philosophical freedom, freedom from causation, which he did not allow, and the expression of power in the social realm, social freedom, which great men of will could grasp, for the moment at least (see discussion in chapter three). Conrad thus could be simultaneously driven and free. In *Manfred*, the Voice delivering the spell over his unconscious body reminds us that through his own inner impulsion, the futile attempt to transcend the inadequacy of his state, he has become his own pursuer. She echoes Tasso: "Nor to slumber, nor to die, / Shall be in thy destiny" (I.i.254-55). We might recall another towering will whose restlessness also "cried death to sleep."

The wanderer in Shelley's *Alastor* also is not afoot by the pleasure of a free will; rather he was "driven" (232), "fled" (237), pursued by a "distempered dream" (225). Though at times, like Byron, Shelley will grant men collectively the curse of restlessness, aware of "the inadequacy of their state to their conceptions" (as in *PU* I.543-45), still he follows the others in granting for the poet, for himself, special hopes and special despair. Without doubt, the poet alone struggles across the vacant sea of pain, his highest vision costs him the deepest grief: "For me the world is grown too void and cold, / Since Hope pursues immortal Destiny / With steps thus slow . . ." (*R of I* XII.xxx).

Keats describes the imaginative mind as caught between two states of reality, "in a sort of Purgatory," unable to lose himself in the pleasures of either:

Things cannot to the will
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought;
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,--
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.
("Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds," 25 Mar 1818)

And Endymion yearns as the poet yearns:

Where soil is men grow,
Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
There is no depth to strike in: I can see
Naught earthly worth my compassing. . . .
 rather tie
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
My love's fair dwelling.

Sometimes he is surely not the disciple of Wordsworth.

What Lady Blessington interprets as semireligious and Neo-Platonic in Byron's description of man as "the prison of clay in which the heavenly spark is confined" (qtd. in Knight 243), I read as referring to the imagination-fed will, to a tug against the chains of temporal cares as Shelley and Keats understood it, the prison of the body inadequate to its "confin'd" imagination. Wordsworth refers to the imagination in this case when he speaks of the "soul":

But, after all,
Is aught so certain as that man is doomed
To breathe beneath a vault of ignorance?
The natural roof of that dark house in which
His soul is pent! . . .
And they perhaps err least, the lowly class
Whom a benign necessity compels
To follow reason's least ambition course . . .
 unperplexed by doubt,
And unincited by a wish to look
Into high objects farther than they may,
Pace to and fro, from morn till eventide,
The narrow avenue of daily toil
For daily bread. (*Excursion* 5.586-601)

And this is the conclusion of the Narrator, not the Solitary. The blessings of Nature are reduced, in the once egalitarian Wordsworth, to the peace of mind of oxen.

Not for the poet himself this drudgery of common folk, of course. Yet, in their higher purpose, all the Romantics indulged in a martyrdom to an even greater misery:

Whoso encamps
To take a fancied city of delight,
O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;
Another city doth he set about,
Free from the smallest pebble-bead of doubt
That he will seize on trickling honey-combs:
Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams,
And onward to another city speeds.
(*Endymion* 2.142ff)¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷See also "To--(Oh! there are spirits of the air)".

VI.C The Response

VI.C.1 Resignation: "wake to weep"

Prometheus: I caused mortals to cease foreseeing doom.

Chorus: What cure did you provide them with against
that sickness?

Prometheus: I placed in them blind hopes.

Chorus: That was a great gift you gave to men.

(Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 250ff)

Aeschylus knew that the future reflected back at man a dismal image (though not for Prometheus), so hope could only exist in ignorance of this; hope and foresight were exclusive of each other. Shelley felt he saw a perfectible future, a conviction which made hope and foresight one. Byron likewise unified hope and foresight, but in despair. He played the role of anti-Prometheus, to give man foresight and take away his hope. He did not intend such a villainous role, of course, though he well knew that he was perceived this way; he just could not ignore what seemed simple truth. He also needed such a vision that he might present his heroic answer, his apotheosis of man in the struggle. But the Pandora's box of purposelessness had been open, and remains so.

Coleridge tried to make hope a providential blessing:

[Man's] Maker has distinguished him from the Brute that perishes, by making Hope an instinct of his nature and an indispensable condition of his moral and intellectual progression. But a natural instinct constitutes a natural right, as far as its gratification is compatible with the equal rights of others. Hence our ancestors classed those who were incapable of altering their condition from that of their parents, as Bondsmen or Villains, however advantageously they might otherwise be situated. (*LS; Works* 6: 216n)

He has in effect established a progressive principle in man by asserting that hope exists as an instinct, and an instinct cannot exist without its fulfillment being possible ("a natural instinct constitutes a natural right"). Hence God, Immortality, and Freewill; hence the millennium. But more than the Christian millennium, he distinctly (and inconsistently) implies that secular, social hopes

adhere to the same rule ("altering their conditions from that of their parents").¹⁸⁸

Wordsworth was less committal:

we live by hope
And by desire; we see by the glad light
And breathe the sweet air of futurity;
And so we live, or else we have no life.
(*Excursion* 9.22ff)

Byron clearly defines hope as solely the illusion of foresight. The man who can see past the rents in the fabric of this hope pays the price:

Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence. . . .
(Byron, "Prometheus" III)

Prometheus takes comfort in his foresight; in *Prometheus Unbound*, too, the Hours pass in ever more gladsome parade as his release nears. For man, for Byron, foresight only reveals the impassive face of eternity, staring back, promising no release from pain. The gift of foresight, imagination, is a "wretched gift," a cruel joke for man. Prometheus, Satan, Cain, even Io, have friends and allies to sympathize or share their grief. In reality, however, as Ahasuerus, Manfred, and Lear remind us, separateness (by definition) must be suffered alone.

They say that Hope is happiness. . . .
Alas! it is delusion all:
The future cheats us from afar,
Nor can we be what we recall,
Nor dare we think on what we are.
(Byron, "Stanzas for Music (They say that Hope)")

Hope is the shiny side of a corrupted coin; but our memory recalls how future hope became present unhappiness, and thus we may see hope as a deceiver, and not trust it. Byron's denial of hope dips into the blackness we have already seen defined as purposelessness.

¹⁸⁸He makes the same point in verse: "Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve, / And Hope without an object cannot live" ("Work without Hope," 1825).

what sensation is so delightful as Hope? and, if it were not for Hope, where would the Future be?--in hell. It is useless to say *where* the Present is, for most of us know; and as for the Past, *what* predominates in memory?--*Hope baffled*. Ergo, in all human affairs, it is Hope--Hope--Hope. (*Journal*, 28 Jan 1821)

Shelley, who had invested so much in social hopes, became a great spokesman of the chasm of "the inadequacy of his state to his Conceptions." Before meeting Byron and drifting free from his ever more uncomfortable reformist facade, we hear in *Alastor* of "Hope and despair, / The torturers" (639-40), where both halves of the once moral mechanism of pleasure and pain now bring pain, and work to no constructive effect. Love appears as torturer in "Julian and Maddalo" (438ff), "the fuel / Of the mind's hell," and the treachery of the former denizens of the heart recurs as a theme throughout his post-*Alastor* poems (e.g. the final lines of "To--(Oh! there are spirits of the air)" and "Sonnet (Lift not the painted veil)"). As he writes to John Gisborne (10 Apr 1822): "Perhaps all discontent with the *less* (to use a Platonic sophism) supposes a just claim to the *greater*, & that we admirers of *Faust* are on the right road to Paradise." Such wan Byronic facetiousness grew easier for him as he matured.

We have seen in Wordsworth how hopes decayed from "Tintern Abbey" (1798) through "Peele Castle" (1806); that most of the truly efficacious "spots of time" come in the 1799 parts of *The Prelude*, that ambiguity and doubt come with the 1804-05 additions. There was a recovery of optimism in 1804, from a depth reached in 1802 (the early stanzas of the "Intimations Ode"), as reflected by the pragmatic hopes of poems such as "The Kitten and the Falling Leaves" and the continuation of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." The 1802 stanzas of the "Intimations Ode" leave hopes in disarray, the poem shudders to a halt in a morass of separateness. Recovery comes with a compromise of expectations: we might not ever again sport with the children along the shore, but we may partake in their joy from a distance, may at least "see" the children and "hear" the waves. Yet this compromise demands a tacit acceptance of separateness. This acceptance does not end the anguish and striving, resurrected with the death of his brother John in the following year, but we now see suggestions of his resignation before the failed revelation, a Christian quiescence. He retires into the Protestantism of

his upbringing, the resignation St. Augustine counseled in *The City of God* when considering the destruction of once "eternal" Rome. God alone is eternal, man irredeemably temporal, all transcendence must await man's being brought to God in immortality.

Wordsworth's struggle to find transcendence outside of Christianity finally withered in the years between the two attempts at this poem. All of his subtle and thorough conceptions of the manifestations of eternity in Nature ultimately made no difference, Nature assured no eternal city, God spoke not through her silences, as much as he pretended He did, and Wordsworth returned to the fold. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" does not advocate Christianity, barely mentions God, yet in the new stoic passiveness, in the surrender of any real hopes for earthly salvation, in the decline of Nature as a certain moral authority (analytic reason's fault six years before), the way is made clear for Christian promises:

Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.
(178ff)

There is no joy in the trudge back to the hovel of faith. Whatever Coleridge said, Christianity to a son of the Enlightenment conjured in the mind pictures of men following "reason's least ambitious course . . . unperplexed by doubt, / And unincited by a wish to look / Into high objects farther than they may . . ." (*Excursion* 5.595ff).

Wordsworth struck the bottom of despair in "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle" (1806), a poetic elegy for his brother, John. He had died at sea a year before, which makes this a still heartfelt but considered response. The slight distance of time allows him to consider the single tragedy in the larger context of separateness and loss. This poem, in fact, associates closely with the "Matthew" and "Lucy" poems of 1799 in subject, if not in style. The loss

of John is quite as irrevocable as Matthew's loss of Emma in "The Two April Mornings" and the Narrator's attitude here mirrors the self-absorbed grief of Matthew in that poem.

In "Peele Castle," however, there is no conclusion of hoped-for unity, no feigned resurrection of the past, the breakup of Wordsworth's "fond illusion" seems complete. The opening section of the poem paints an image of all of creation, represented by figures of the beautiful ("Elysian quiet") and of the sublime ("rugged pile") and holds up this ideal natural harmony, all of Nature herself, as something in which he once had "trust" and "faith." But then, the tone changes, the harmonious ideal he so lovingly constructs collapses, and he admits to irreconcilable grief:

A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old. . . .

The elegy then is no more than superficially about John; his passage into death taunts Wordsworth with separateness. The compromise of the "Intimations Ode" has itself become untenable, sharing the eternal joy from a distance no longer satisfactory. From sporting on the shore himself, to watching with melancholy as children and Nature do so, he grows so distant and encrusted as to be unable to "behold" the sea at all.

He recovers somewhat--two years brings "The White Doe" and a message of benign divinity and quietude. But we must ever be suspicious of this otherwise most self-confessing of poets. "Ode to Duty" (1804, revised 1807) puts on a brave, but not very candid, face in a paean to Christian (and Kantian) duty. An assertive, even hectoring, tone usually suggests a man eager to convince himself. This is partly the case as "Peele Castle" proceeds with "I have submitted to a new control," for surely he deeply needed a renewed divine paternal assurance. The final "Not without hope we suffer and we mourn," ought not to be taken as the whole Wordsworth any more than his humanist self speaking the year before, describing this world as the place where "we find our happiness or not at all."

Christianity defines the moral climate from these years forward; though ambiguity and doubt remain, faith now wins all the arguments. "Yes, it was the mountain Echo" (1806), contemporary with "Peele Castle," appears as a corrective to his former attribution of the sublime voice of eternity to Nature, as in "There was a boy" and "To the Cuckoo," now unambiguously the voice of God. Even the Stock Dove of "O Nightingale! thou surely art" (1807), the sound from the darkness of the trees, the sublime ethereal melancholy, sister to the voice of the flute across the lake, even this is made the fool of Christianizing doggerel; a song "Of serious faith, and inward glee; / That was the song--the song for me!"¹⁸⁹

Ultimately, peace of mind is not blessedness, intimation of immortality is not immortality, and proclamation, even to himself, is not true belief. His deepest and most damaging severing was never to heal. Some of dulling maturity, the loss of childhood receptiveness, may be compensated for, but this only comforts us in our slavery, makes less grievous our bondage to decay. The Wanderer warns that the heart can never forget "The vassalage that binds her to the earth, / Her sad dependence upon time, and all / The trepidations of mortality" (4.421ff). And memory now tortures us with our dead hopes.

Coleridge, with prodigals all about him returning home, could only be delighted in the vindication of his Christianity, both as the sole personal salvation and as chastening Providence. Looking about the ruins of a Europe whose hubris perished with a generation of her young men, he takes comfort in what seemed to be a fatal blow to humanist ideas of moral progress and perfectibility.

We hear . . . less of the jargon of this *enlightened age*. After fatiguing itself, as performer or spectator in the giddy figure-dance of political changes, Europe has seen the shallow foundations of its self-complacent faith give way; and among men of influence and property, we have now more reason to apprehend the stupor of despondence, than the extravagancies of hope, unsustained by experience, or of self-confidence not bottomed on principle. (*SM*; *Works* 6: 39)

Though Shelley was at that very moment attempting to disprove this, to show that

¹⁸⁹Charitably I might suggest that he was reaching for a character voice of childlike delight; but if so, it eluded him.

"extravagancies of hope, unsustained by experience" yet cried against the despondency, his was an almost solitary voice among intellectuals.

Shelley gradually followed the rest: in *The Triumph of Life* and its depiction of Rousseau and Plato, in the tired final speech of Hellas, and in his last letters (see *Letters* 2: 407.) On the necessity of, even the desirability of, major social reform, he trudged off, not just in the direction of Godwinian temperance, but the sort of misanthropy and inertia of Byron (as in his letters warning Hobhouse of radicalism). Keats arrived late in my discussion and departs early, as he did in the age itself, having been no necessitarian at the beginning and not having lived past his arrival at the roadblock of separateness, even to hint to us whether he might have leapt over it or succumbed. Shelley's phrase "wake to weep" precisely captures the moment of realization, a perverse revelation, of separateness, the Keatsian awakening from sleep-death, an awakening not into heaven, but into the nightmare world of his forlorn knight in "La Belle Dame," the awakening of the Ancient Mariner from his swoon to a death-in-life, Adam awakening from his dream and finding it not true.¹⁹⁰ Shelley lived just long enough to show a resignation, yet a more pragmatic accommodation evolving, though slumping a bit to the moral cynicism of Byron. Byron, however, had yet more ground to cover, as we shall see.

Robert Gleckner studies in some detail the overwhelming message of decay and melancholy in Byron's early poems, those since grouped under the title *Hours of Idleness*. This was more than youthful toying with the ideas of deep despair and lovesick melancholy, though Byron did so indulge. The attitude seems to me, though it is difficult to read them without the shadow of later Byron, of a more substantial harshness:

Once I beheld a splendid dream,
A visionary scene of bliss:
Truth! --Wherefore did thy hated beam
Awake me to a world like this?
("I Would I Were a Careless Child," pub. 1808)

¹⁹⁰In Shelley, this phrase appears, or is alluded to, in "Julian and Maddalo" 335-37, *PU* 1.775-79, "Mutability (The flower that smiles today)" 21, and *T of L* in the vision beginning line 41, 331-34, and 430.

Even here we have the dream and "wake to weep," an awakening revelation that, Byronically, is both truth and despairing. In "To a Youthful Friend" (Aug 1808) we find man reduced "but a tool" of his own self-interested passions and society: "must love and hate by rule." And he comes to what Gleckner (7) calls "the accents of Childe Harold":

Fain would I fly the haunts of men--
I seek to shun, not hate mankind;
My breast requires the sullen glen,
Whose gloom may suit a darken'd mind.

This may be gothic cliché, but he found it congenial to his own temperament and threw it back at the literary world redefined as "Byronic." He may pose as a Miltonic Satan, but he believed it as well: "she is too good for a fallen spirit to know . . ." (ltr. to Caroline Lamb, 1 May 1812, speaking of Annabella.)

I have presented Byron backwards, earlier offering some of his solutions to separateness (heroism, fame, Neo-Platonism, Love), each of limited or transient success for him, and only then giving some measure of the *a priori* problem, in part defined by some early rejected solutions. As Byron alone began life from an assumption of separateness, his whole *oeuvre* developed as his response to it. Given his view of the world and man's place in it, the question becomes, how is man to respond? In short, he may either accept his lot, seek to find meaning within this life, or seek in some way to transcend his mortality. Byron managed to look at or into all of the major responses current at the time. Some he mostly accepted, some less so, some not at all; one, the Byronic hero, he made his own.

The alternative to immortality of the soul, oblivion, Byron views in the manner of Keats, "a sleep and a forgetting." This underscores their shared pessimism regarding the hopes and possibilities of this world; only a confirmed pessimist can embrace the ending of consciousness as naught but an escape from pain. There is something both of Stoic endurance and Byronic defiance in this view in *Childe Harold* canto II (vii):

Why should we shrink from what we cannot shun?
Each hath its pang, but feeble sufferers groan
With brain-born dreams of Evil all their own.
Pursue what Chance or Fate proclaimeth best--
Peace waits us on the shores of Acheron:

There no forced banquet claims the sated guest,
But Silence spreads the couch of ever welcome Rest.

Death is a peace where the departed will find no more woe. Acheron, the river of woe, serves Byron as Lethe serves Keats (and Dante), as a place where tormentors, whether Nemesis or one's own memory, vanish. Keats, the most materially poor of the major Romantic poets, saw life as the pursuit of fullness of both physical and emotional senses, transcendence through a surfeit of life, in all its lust and love. Byron, who knew more of both, and had more reason, he would have thought, for forgetting, looked wearily to a satiety of disappointment and (mostly emotional) pain. Again, the attitude is Stoic, and in a letter to Hodgson he quotes Seneca: "Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque Mors nihil. . . ." ¹⁹¹

I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another. If men are to live, why die at all? and if they die, why disturb the sweet and sound sleep that "knows no waking"? . . . I looked to death as a relief from pain, without a wish for an after-life, but a confidence that the God who punishes in this existence had left that last asylum for the weary. (3 Sept 1811)

Whatever troubles he suffered on the immortality question at Harrow (and it is not unreasonable to suppose that it must have figured prominently in the accusations of atheism), once he had presented the world with even the watered-down skepticism of *Childe Harold*, the earnest evangelists among his friends pursued the salvation of his soul with as much enthusiasm as Byron's considerable patience would allow. Between Hodgson and Annabella came Robert Charles Dallas. Byron writes to him on 26 September 1811: "I am as comfortable in my creed as others, inasmuch as it is better to sleep than to be awake." He asserts the point again in "Euthanasia" (1812):

When Time, or soon or late, shall bring
The dreamless sleep that lulls the dead,
Oblivion! may thy languid wing
Wave gently o'er my dying bed!

But despite the exclamation marks, it is something to be accepted with

¹⁹¹"After death there is nothing, and death itself is nothing . . ." (*Troades* 397-98).

resignation, not joy ("Without regret, without a groan"). Seneca had concluded the act: "quaeris quo iaceas post obitum loco? / quo non nata iacent."¹⁹² Byron borrows the idea:

To be the nothing that I was
Ere born to life and living woe!
9.
Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o'er thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou has been,
'Tis something better not to be.

Even in *Don Juan*, where he seems to shy a bit from his more controversial positions, at least to qualify or obscure in a way that suggests an eye to his old popularity, even here he sticks with this obviously very appealing image: "Death, so called, is a thing which makes men weep, / And yet a third of Life is passed in sleep" (XIV, Jan-Mar 1823, iii).

VI.C.2 Skepticism and Satire

Marchand sums Byron's essential problem with religion:

Byron had an almost superstitious awe of the sincerely religious mind. Though he was tough-minded enough to reject the shams of religious pretense and theological inconsistencies, he had not the conviction of his skepticism. He had too great and too obsessive a sense of the mysteries of life and the universe to be quite happy in his negative beliefs. (III.1104)

In most of *Childe Harold* mutability rules and religion is included in an Enlightenment way under transient human institutions. As with Marcus Aurelius, this new Stoic of an uneasy age denies its claims:

Even Gods must yield--Religions take their turn . . .
Man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds;
Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope
is built on reeds. (II.iii, Mar 1810)

¹⁹²"you ask where you lie after your death? / There where the unborn lie" (407-08).

His first salvo against Christianity occurs in "Granta. A Medley" (Oct 1806, stanzas 15-16), where he unleashes an Enlightenment, deist contempt for Methodist enthusiasms. "The Prayer of Nature" (29 Dec 1806) attacks the traditional inconsistencies and illogicalities in the Christian account of evil, original sin, and redemption, and does so from the the standpoint of accepted norms of social justice. He abuses the familiar Enlightenment villains of priestly power, religious intolerance,¹⁹³ and Christianity as superstition. This "Prayer" addresses a god, one bearing some resemblance to the Christian God, but "of Nature." A letter to his close friend, Edward Long, of 16 April 1807, stakes out positions he was to fudge somewhat in later life, but I think not substantially alter:

Of Religion I know nothing, at least in its *favour*. We have *fools* in all sects and Impostors in most; why should I believe mysteries no one understands, because written by men who chose to mistake madness for Inspiration, and style themselves *Evangelicals*? . . . This much I will venture to affirm, that all the virtues and pious *Deeds* performed on Earth can never entitle a man to Everlasting happiness in a future State; nor on the other hand can such a Scene as a Seat of eternal punishment exist, it is incompatible with the benign attributes of a Deity to suppose so . . . I have lived a *Deist*, what I shall die I know not. . . .

The unfairness of the orthodox concept of Hell obsessed him, linking to the deep perdition within him, his guilt fueling fear. It continued to do so through those final conversations at Mesolonghi with Dr. Kennedy.

If not a Christian, then what? He complains irritably to Hodgson, who had tried to categorize him as a Wordsworthian style Neo-Platonist:

I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all; but I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichaeon, Spinozist, Gentile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and hatred of each other. Talk of Galileeism? Show me the effects--are you better, wiser, kinder by your precepts? I will bring you ten Mussulmans shall shame you in all goodwill towards men, prayer to God, and duty to their neighbours. . . . let me live, well if possible, and die without pain. The rest is with God. . . . (ltr., 3 Sept 1811)

¹⁹³Minor issues in England, making his attack seem mostly posturing.

By most evidence he was an Epicurean, at least he approaches perhaps as close to it as to any faith.

But intellectually, Byron was first and last a committed skeptic, a doubter of all things, not merely religion. His comment to Hodgson on Christianity applies to most of life: "I deny nothing, but doubt everything" (ltr., 4 Dec 1811). He opens the Journal entry of 7 November 1813 with: "I believe--or rather am in *doubt*, which is the ne plus ultra of mortal faith." He elevates skepticism to an epistemological authority of its own, an *a priori* truth from which to evaluate the unproven. He could not help but admire the greatest of modern skeptics, Hume: "There is no refuting him," he said, referring to the *Essay on Miracles* (Marchand 3: 1108-09).¹⁹⁴

Being tied to no creed but skepticism, or more generally opposition, his speculations could freely wander. Yet one man's openmindedness proves an irresistible lure to those who have lashed their insecurities firmly to faith. Throughout his life Byron's friends saw him as an errant lamb fattened for conversion. Shelley, as I hope to show, did indeed convert him briefly, or rather periodically, to a vague pantheist Wordsworthianism, a Neo-Platonism not at all harmonious with his normally hostile universe (though perhaps a needed emotional vacation from it). He found useful Shelley's distinction that belief or faith cannot be considered an act of conscious will, that arguments for faith are a contradiction: a "Man's creed does not depend upon *himself*;--*who* can say I *will* believe--this--that--or the other?--and least of all that which he least can comprehend?" (ltr. to John Shepherd, 8 Dec 1821). This appeals both to his constitutional indecisiveness and his belief in the predestination of character. Besides, such an argument effectively silences proselytizers (one hopes).

¹⁹⁴It helped Hume's case that he was undoubtedly one of the few philosophers Byron would read and understand, and the *Essay on Miracles*, with its dismissal of the supernatural, offered a congenial though limited palliative to a fatalist. But clear thinking and self-assured skeptics like Hume and Voltaire appealed only to his satiric, distrusting intellect, they did not touch his irrational fears. Like many Romantics, he remained intellectually loyal to the Enlightenment, while emotionally in rebellion.

The satirist of Christianity never let up on his victim. There was nothing accidental in the climax of *The Siege of Corinth* (Spring 1816), the greatest carnage and butchery taking place not only in the church, but at the altar itself. Byron's historical precedent was the final refuge of the Christians of Constantinople at St. Sophia in the Moslem conquest of 1453, but Byron's details have a distinctly Voltairean bitterness to them. The guided tour of heaven in *Cain* instantly recalls the *Paradiso*, but with a satiric twist. Dante's Hell lies at the center of the universe, the furthest possible distance from God, who occupies the circumference, beyond the final sphere, the Primum Mobile. Lucifer shows Cain a Hades which itself sits where Dante's God was enthroned, at the outer reaches of space, at the pinnacle of hierarchy and power. Rather than moving God, Byron places Heaven coextensive with Hades, which exists, as Lucifer says, "*Here, and o'er all space*" (II.i.368). This strongly suggests the Manichaeism which Byron was eager to deny. The scheme leaves man at the center of the universe, which affirms Byron's humanism but sentences man to that humble point--once assumed exalted--Dante called Hell.

As Byron's need for opposition was immanent and *a priori*--a "natural love of contradiction & paradox" (ltr. to Ly. Melbourne, 1 Jul 1813)--it reached beyond learned Enlightenment distrust of religion, to embrace all "systems," which meant philosophy. In *Childe Harold*, describing a state of melancholy where the typical pleasures of the heart had palled, he rather briskly dismisses philosophy from ever providing him comfort: "Not that Philosophy on such a mind / E'er deigned to bend her chastely-awful eyes" (I.lxxxiii). His criterion of earthly salvation (or amelioration), emotional succor, clearly excludes philosophy. Poets being creatures of a dominant heart, this is the case more often than not. Even so-called philosopher-poets either illuminate another's thoughts as Lucretius did Epicurus and Pope Bolingbroke, or try to derive their own and make a wreck of it as did Coleridge (as brilliant as the pieces may have been).

That he would champion observations rather than speculations, Pope rather than Plato, seems making a virtue out of a necessity for one who ever suffered the tyranny of the impressions of the moment; his inability to discipline his thoughts defended by a refusal to do so. Lovell says that "unfixed opinions were of the very nature of his mind" (27) and quotes Leigh Hunt's observation that Byron

"did not know what he was" as a religious or philosophic thinker.¹⁹⁵ It has been noted by Steffan that Lucifer, in *Cain*, proposes no ethics, no metaphysics, not even a theology, except negatively. Nor does Manfred. As *Cain* is not a didactic or philosophic tract, this is no problem; dramatically, Lucifer plays to Cain's disaffection, which alone suffices to justify his statements. Cain, like Byron, was "born for opposition" and, like Lucifer, he defined himself against the positions of others. Such a character knows what he disapproves of because his feelings (innate or early learned) tell him how he must react to the external world. But the next intellectual step, to decide on a positive converse, that is, what would please him, remains untaken. Cain, like Byron, complains of confusion and powerlessness but seems blind to the obvious next step of creating some positive image of how reality might be ordered to solve his problem. Although this section considers various responses to the dilemma of man on earth, in Byron even these arise independently as separate thoughts, products of the despair, not solutions. Ideas and theories pass through Byron like scudding clouds, hopes and assertions appear and disappear like phantoms of Astarte, unwilled and ineffective. Byron's mind might catch glimpses of paradise in the distance, but he is too committed to his reality of dreadful night even to imagine how the mind might construct its own vision of hope toward which it might purpose.¹⁹⁶

In *Don Juan*, in the poet's final year (canto XV, Mar-Apr 1823), he still stands in need of a positive and unimpeachable authority: "But what's Reality? Who has its clue? / Philosophy? No; she too much rejects. / Religion? Yes; but which of all her sects?" (lxxxix). He wants a guide out of the dark wood (but not as strongly as he needs the opposite, the life-giving ferment of opposition that opposes subservience to any guide). Religion loses authority in her multitudinous voices; philosophy because she provides (in his view) only what he could provide already: skepticism. He turns away as he ever does--"why will I thus entangle / Myself with metaphysics?"--but only after having justified his rootless skepticism as the only refuge from the drear rain of indecision. He vaguely yearned for some

¹⁹⁵ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*. Philadelphia, 1828, p. 114.

¹⁹⁶ Only *The Island* suggests otherwise, and I cannot accept that as an expression of real hope (see earlier discussion) without knowing what he would have written next.

stability, but intellectually and temperamentally, he resisted dull consistency. As he says of his *Journal*:

God knows what contradictions it may contain. If I am sincere with myself (but I fear one lies more to one's self than to any one else), every page should confute, refute, and utterly adjure its predecessor. (*Journal*, 6 Dec 1813)

After all, he takes inconsistency as one proof of freedom (then, at other times as slavery to the heart). Disputing with Leigh Hunt's defense of the general sanity of poets (a subject on which Byron was not without personal experience), he takes especial objection less to Hunt's conclusions than with his attempts to codify his argument rationally. In Byron's world observations and the feelings that grew from them (or produced them) ruled: "I have not time nor paper to *attack* your *system*--which ought to be done--were it only because it is a *system* . . ." (ltr., 4-6 Nov 1815?).

The problem with philosophy in general for Byron was that it did not address his emotional needs. It might have, for his natural genius leaned toward the German Romantics, many of whom found unity and freedom in idealism (Fichte's letters often bubble over with enthusiasm and joy). But the great power of his heart and lesser power of his mind, did not open such portals to Byron, and the philosophy bred in him, Stoicism, answered not the cries of the heart: "Seneca is nothing to a fit of illness" (written on the back of a copy of Pliny). The comment recalls Coleridge's lament for how philosophical theories to an aching grief lie about as pitifully as toys next the bedside of a child deathly ill, and Keats, the sensualist, in a similar vein.

At various times in his works he probes different philosophic claims for moral authority.¹⁹⁷ Empiricism and historical providence are overthrown in the example of Napoleon:

Had Buonaparte won at Waterloo,
It had been firmness; now 't is pertinacity:

¹⁹⁷Rather, he sets up straw men to be knocked down. But in a *Weltanschauung* where men have no real freedom to choose, where a successful harmony with reality is preordained as impossible, what chance has philosophy or religion?.

Must the event decide between the two?
I leave it to your people of sagacity
To draw the line between the false and true,
If such can e'er be drawn by Man's capacity. . . .
(*DJ* XIV.xc, Jan-Mar 1823)

Truth and ethics (right and wrong) are hostages to the whim of Fate or sheer randomness (if Byron allowed for such a thing). I recall Wordsworth's Oswald: "What! feel remorse, where, if a cat had sneezed, / A leaf had fallen, the thing had never been / Whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals" (*Borderers* III.1565ff). Wordsworth, however, had offered this only for our condemnation, as an example of the consequences to morality of pure rationalism. We never see such again from him.

Necessitarianism and rationalism receive the same treatment from Byron as they did from Wordsworth. Ulric, in *Werner* (V.i.440-55) echoes the self-justifying determinist utilitarian anarchy of Oswald. He accuses his father:

Remember *who* hath taught me . . .
That passion was our nature? that the goods
Of Heaven waited on the goods of fortune? . . .
We have done
With right and wrong; and now must only ponder
Upon effects, not causes.

He appeals to utilitarian consequences ("effects") rather than Christian intentionalism, the heart and will ("causes"). We are left in no doubt that this conclusion is prelude to disaster. There remains no alternative to a moral authority in the heart, even if its own efforts to bring us to any manner of salvation are doomed as well. He followed his Augustinian Calvinism only halfway, to a distrust of the mind (here was his basis for his seeming idealist skepticism of the senses). He did not follow it back from denial to affirmation in faith, but remained out in the dark wood of skepticism.

Of course he recognized from the earliest the need for public writings to have a moral effect; only the twentieth century has largely excused the artist from this requirement. Byron entered upon the public stage in his modest, if not humble, debut in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1808-09) in a highly didactic way. His satire seeks to serve morality by exposing cant and hypocrisy, and in moments specifically asks that others do the same:

Why slumbers GIFFORD? . . .
Are there no follies for his pen to purge?
Are there no fools whose backs demand the scourge?
Are there no sins for Satire's Bard to greet?
Stalks not gigantic Vice in every street? . . .
Arouse thee, GIFFORD! be thy promise claimed,
Make bad men better, or at least ashamed.
(819ff)

He may well be primarily motivated by an innate need for opposition, but he does direct this organic vituperation in the defense of moral good (as he sees it), rather than in mere peevishness or self-interest (or crime, as some of his similarly driven picaresque heroes). In this poem, he specifically mentions Pope's *Essay on Man* as an example of what poetry should be, a somehow meaningful reference, yet puzzling to me as this specific Pope indulges in dry philosophizing (though granted, not metaphysically) rather than Byron's preferred social satire (e.g. *The Dunciad*) or plot and narrative.

If the Romantic age remained one where artistic works still received praise or blame on their moral effect, where Shakespeare could cause offense on this account, things were beginning to loosen. Many contemporaries perceived that Byron himself carried the banner of the new immorality, though he hotly protested, and attacked in turn the unabashed sensuality of poets such as Keats or the "French" atheism of radicals and Godwinians. But the public had hardly heard of most of these, while everyone read Byron. Since the public could not, or would not separate the poet from the man, the critics as well saw them as mutually supportive images of each other. For Byron to defend his poetry in terms of poetic licence alone--evoking the shades of Swift, Richardson, Fielding, Voltaire, and the like--addresses only half of their motivations for abuse, and the less interesting half as far as the public were concerned.

Yet the fear that society was becoming unhinged morally had some foundation. Still unsettled by the continuing, hardly diminished echoes of the French revolutionary atheism and social radicalism, especially as felt in the rolling thunder of Napoleon's armies on the continent, English readers may be easily forgiven for feeling both excited and frightened by the borderline moral anarchy of the Turkish tales. This was an age, after all, where for the first time in 150 years, Shakespeare could appear generally before the public in his natural rags,

shorn of the "robes and furr'd gowns" supplied by past ages (such as Tate, Pope, and Cibber). Kemble and Macready, aided surely by Byron's shaking of the throne of cant, could successfully restore the Bard to his original texts. Yet the first action of the post-Napoleonic moralizing age was Bowdler and his sanitized edition of 1818. So it was that a schizophrenia developed in this unsteady age between the liberal and the frightened mind.

Knowing as we do the considerable body of art and thought of the nineteenth century drawing on Byron and Byronic types, we can fully see how profound was Byron's influence over his own and immediately successive ages. The roots of the twentieth-century absolution of artists from moral responsibility do indeed partially rest in Byron and the "gothic" tradition in literature, in such as the Turkish tales (and *Manfred* and *Cain*). Byron tries to divorce the nature of the character on the page from the effect on the reader: "The Giaour is certainly a bad character--but not dangerous--& I think his fate & his feelings will meet with few proselytes."¹⁹⁸ Later, still generally referring to all his works, from the Turkish tales through *Don Juan*, he employs his favorite defense: realism, similar to the *Cain* defense of verisimilitude. He was undoubtedly sincere in this apology as told to Lady Blessington, though in the story related he employed the argument merely to goad Madame de Stael:

I was willing to plead guilty of having sometimes represented vice under alluring forms; but so it was generally in the world, therefore it was necessary to paint it so; but that I never represented virtue under the sombre and disgusting shapes of dullness, severity, and *ennui*, and that I always took care to represent the votaries of vice as unhappy themselves, and entailing unhappiness on those that loved them; so that *my moral* was unexceptionable. (Blessington 26)

He does typically present his most beloved earthly condition, true love (a combination, in the Keatsian dialectical Byron, of eros and agape), in an angelic, if doomed, glow and contrasts it often with the sordid sorts of lusts he always

¹⁹⁸Ltr. to Murray, 12 Oct 1813. There is yet to be written a study of public, critical, and philosophical views on the moral effects and responsibility of creative art through the ages, a history of that ageless human conviction that art can have moral or immoral effect on its public. Mine however, is not that study, and I offer in this section only a few observations on Byron's own sense of moral responsibility.

associated with power or privilege (in *Don Juan*: the sultana, Catherine, the ladies of English society). Trueblood (170n) compares this appeal to a representation of the truth of society to Fielding's very similar defense of *Joseph Andrews* in the preface to that novel.

When cantos I and II of *Don Juan* went before the Chancery on suspicion of improper taste and decency, that is, on its moral message, the decision reflected the Enlightenment Lockean reasoning of the deciding authority:

that one great tendency of the book was not an unfair one. It was to show in Don Juan's ultimate character the ill effect of that injudicious maternal education which Don Juan is represented as having received, and which had operated injuriously upon his mind. (Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and his Friends*, I.407; qtd. in Boyd 17)

The facile sensationalism of this suggests a judge employing an expedient reason to dismiss the case; the judgement could as well have applied, with minor variations of the adjective before "education" to almost any narrative of a man's misfortunes, from *Tom Jones* to *Don Quixote* to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*. Yet it does not apply to *Don Juan*. Don Juan clearly comes to his dissoluteness far more as an inheritance from his father, and a more general innate nature inflicted by Fate, than any influence of his mother. He developed into the natural ingenuous youth he did, in spite of his mother's attempts to instill a moral code in him. (If the judge meant by "injudicious" her excessive zeal and sees him as reacting against it, he still misses, perhaps prudently, the picture this really is of the workings of Fate.) The simple difference between being determined to vice by your mother or by Fate is the vast gulf between a standard morality tale and a total denial of moral culpability. Juan's character and subsequent adventures Byron pointedly places out of the realm of moral judgement by making Don Juan a passive subject of sources beyond his control. This is the real moral anarchy of the poem, the dangerous message being not that vice goes unpunished, as the critics and judge chose to pretend it was, but that in a determined universe, moral culpability may not even exist. The judge works from an assumption of Juan's moral culpability, excusing him of it; Byron suggests from the start that he has none. Byron cared not for the common moral requirement that art show man or the world as it should be, and in doing so help

it toward that goal; his realism and pessimism forced him to portray life and mankind as it was.

But much of this seems subconscious. Byron, still, plays the innocent when questioned on motives for satire. So he assured the Tory, Murray, only a little disingenuously, that if his works have a didactic effect this is only coincidental, perhaps a collateral effect demonstrating the truth of what are simple expressions of the inner heart. "I have written from the fullness of my mind," he says of the first two cantos of *Don Juan*, "from passion--from impulse--from many motives . . ." (ltr., 6 Apr 1819). Still, satire cannot but have a moral agenda and foundation. Among these "many motives," he honestly felt himself delivering a salutary lesson in *Don Juan*, that stiff slap in the face of hypocrisy and oppression administered by the unabashed satirist. He tells James Kennedy of his poetic intent behind satire:

to remove the cloke, which the manners and maxims of society . .
. throw over their secret sins, and show them to the world as they
really are. . . . to unmask the specious hypocrisy, and show it in its
native colours. (Kennedy; Lovell 442-43)

Or, as he says in *Don Juan* itself:

Politics, and Policy, and Piety,
Are topics which I sometimes introduce,
Not only for the sake of variety,
But as subservient to a moral use;
Because my business is to *dress* society,
And stuff with *sage* that very verdant goose.
(XV.xciii)

Sage was not his spice, pepper perhaps.

Yet there is something a bit unfair (and self-defeating) in Byron's crusade against cant, the hypocrisy, humbug, and hyperbole that Britain so clung to in that besieged and dangerous age. A nation, like an individual, creates for itself a complex illusion of a self-image, a mask sufficiently admirable to sustain needed self-esteem. This is not optional; individuals and cohesive groups of individuals absolutely require it for personal or collective psychological stability. This need becomes vastly more acute when the threat, external or internal is greatest, and at such times the "cant" grows more forceful (or grotesque depending on your point

of view). Cant may be defined as the diverse expressions of self-image--especially empirically incorrect, distorted, or exaggerated expressions--of a unified group of people (a social, national, or religious group for instance) when the image is consciously known by its very perpetrators to be false or misleading. Byron, one of the most egregious of all makers of masks and players of roles, was not willing to allow British society under the stress of war the comfort of such self-flattery and knowing lies. For reasons already suggested, Byron grew up with an extreme hatred for hypocrisy: "In these days the grand *primum mobile* of England is *cant*; cant political, cant poetical, cant religious, cant moral; but always cant, multiplied through all the varieties of life" (qtd. in Vulliamy 16).

Ultimately, as a poet, the readers and critics of his age placed him in one of two widely divergent traditions, one with credentials in morality, though often suspect (satire) and the other specifically leaning, for titillation effect, toward amorality (the gothic). The "Satanic school," as characterized by Southey, included Byron in the company of the likes of "Monk" Lewis, Barry Cornwall (B. W. Procter), William Beckford, and some of the Germans. Most of these Byron dismissed as readily as Southey, and resented the comparison. He saw his own gothicism as of a type with Walter Scott, Moore, perhaps Radcliffe (and even Southey himself, though both poets might have vehemently denied that). Byron rightly gave more weight to his satires, trying to join the ranks of Pope, Johnson, Gifford, and perhaps Voltaire. Of the other Romantic poets of this discussion, only Coleridge briefly joined him as a writer of gothic tales in his mature works.

While the public, especially abroad, viewed him in terms of the age, mostly through *Childe Harold*, the picaresque tales, and *Manfred*, that is, his "gothicism," defining him by his similarities with the gothic mainstream of the times, his critics and fellow poets looked for that which distinguished him from his age, emphasizing his slightly anachronistic satires. So Coleridge could report that "W. Wordsworth calls Lord Byron the mocking bird of our Parnassian ornithology" (marginalia in Pepys' *Memoirs*; qtd. in Rutherford 266), and Lamb, a classic example of one whose disgust with Byron's character (Lamb had no room to throw stones at another's public behavior) blinded him to the works themselves, did admit that "He was at best a Satyrist" (ltr. to Bernard Barton, 15 May 1824). None of the other major Romantics seriously attempted satire; they

were too earnestly pursuing belief for the skepticism which satire requires.¹⁹⁹

Of course, what is satire but a recognition of an earthly gap between the real and the ideal. So the "Byronic" Byron of *Childe Harold*, *Manfred*, and *Cain* and the satiric Byron of *Beppo*, *Heaven and Hell*, and *Don Juan*, are but two responses to two parallel dichotomies. In the former, the poet stands under the storm and shouts out the anger of oppressed mankind at the deaf despotism of the fatal divinity; in the latter, the poet stands outside of the world of men and accuses society and establishment of tyranny over stifled human dignity. The satire hopes to illuminate the social gulf between pretense and actual behavior, between man as he would act as free and as he actually acts under manipulation by society, custom, and tyrannous government. He wants the basic want of all satire, that men should see themselves as others see them, that from their chains this knowledge should free them. The cosmic rebel, on the other hand, accepts that the gulf between man's transcendental aspirations and his actual mortality cannot be closed, no matter how much his bold accusations might illuminate it. This realization we expect to bring fatalistic despair, but Byron tries to offer the heroic self as a consolation. The issue for Byron is not only freedom, but also, in both cases, human dignity, something which demands either freedom or the forthright claim of the right to freedom. We have seen how Nemesis zealously guards the status quo in both spheres. The revenges of society Byron himself had felt keenly, from the obvious (e.g. the fickleness of popularity and the pressures of friends, public, and government toward degrees of censorship) to the subtle, as in the way love always ends in pain and marriage in rancor.

This is, in its peculiar way, far more revolutionary a message than any from the radicals he so distrusted. They would apply the anger of *Manfred* to political despotism; Byron was more comfortable keeping such powerful defiance where the consequences remained with the self. Only impotent could he release full power. He was more prudent in attacking what could be changed, such as social injustice. Had his social rebelliousness mirrored the cosmic, he would have

¹⁹⁹Including Shelley, despite offhand efforts like "Swellfoot, the Tyrant," and "Peter Bell the Third."

exceeded Cobbett or Paine. This was abhorrent; in the unsettled political climate there was too much danger of actual success. Where rebellion might be effective, better the message be couched in a socially acceptable literary convention like satire. This was not fear of retaliation or playing to his upper and middle class public, who comprised or aspired to the society he despised. Rather, as I have indicated, he did not wish for overthrow--perhaps not even reform. I would be inclined to argue that in all cases, radical or moderate, he was attacking what he knew his verse could never threaten, that ultimately he simply needed a well-anchored opponent against which to exorcise his largely innate, essentially objectless petulance. Yet it remains true that such was his poetic power and influence, that, almost despite himself, by redirecting his restless ire at "metaphysics," he proved far more subversive (of ideological establishments) than he would have wished.

VI.C.3 The *Beppo* Compromise

After the Geneva summer under the greater will of Shelley, after the restless speculation in new-found freedom of *Childe Harold* III and *Manfred*, Byron struggles in *Childe Harold*, canto IV, to return to earth. Of the ethereal beings of the mind,

I saw or dreamed of such,--but let them go,--
They came like Truth--and disappeared like dreams;
And whatsoe'er they were--are now but so:
I could replace them if I would; still teems
My mind with many a form, which aptly seems
Such as I sought for, and at moments found;
Let these too go--for waking Reason deems
Such over-weening phantasies unsound,
And, other voices speak, and other sights surround. (vii)

Byron did not peer into the Piranesian pit of the godless, morally arbitrary universe any more happily than Coleridge. But rather than hiding behind a muddled reality, or fending off the spectre with facile faith, after viewing the worst, Byron then continued on his way. His needs lay not in the affirmation of moral order nor in the benign Great Parent, so he could afford to pass these havens by. It was in the nature of Byron when he suspected a terror to go forth

and face it. Cain could not but demand to see all of hell that Lucifer could show him; Manfred could only ascend to the hall of Arimanes or conjure up the worst of demons; and Faust had to attend Walpurgis Night. So Byron wrote the poem "Darkness," and a few months later, *Manfred*. But more than these, characters from Lara to Lucifer to Japhet trod variations of the desert of separateness in which loitered Keats' pale knight. It is not a dream, but an inner and outer horror, at once the unique misery of the highly sensitive individual and a paradigm of the mortal hell of mankind. At his most optimistic, Byron limited this darkness to the shadows of life under the sun of Love, or the night when Love departs.

Beppo immediately follows *Childe Harold IV* precisely because there was nowhere else to go. *Manfred* had closed the book on sublime gothic angst, as Dante's *Commedia* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony had left nothing to say on the nature of heaven or triumphal earthly joy. Satire did not mean a change of landscape, but a turning of Byron's attention from the mesmerizing chaldron of separateness, the *Weltschmerz* of "Darkness" and *Manfred*, to the flickering humanity capering across its service. Wordsworth admired life's fierce spirit dancing on the surface of blind rolling Necessity (in "Stray Pleasures"), wise enough not to ask the damning question of Keats--"Why did I laugh to-night." Having accepted the cost of admitting the gaiety to be self-deception, despite knowing that only the blind can laugh, Byron returns to the living.

Romantic poetry rejoins the world of people, society, and politics with a wink and a nod in *Beppo*. The haughty Byronic hero returns to the smothering arms of normal society. Ideology surrenders to pragmatism. All the wandering exiles of Romanticism here decide to return home and accept the futility of it all. And this is precisely what does happen in *Beppo*: the wanderer comes home, accepts and is accepted by humanity; the pirate, the lawless rejoins the embrace of the fold. Byron has found the reality for which he sought: *Beppo* comes home to being nagged by his wife and just getting by, more or less, as people do. At the risk of overstatement, *Beppo* does seem the true return of poetry from the

wilderness.²⁰⁰ From the standpoint of society and the real problems of people and nations, *Beppo* stands as the crest of a renewed social responsibility in Byron, a wave whose rise began with his exile not many months before. Despite occasional poems by all of the Romantic poets directed at specific topical events, despite Shelley's far too obscure allegories (for any effect on the public, that is), none of the Romantic poets actually had dedicated themselves to the real concerns and passions of contemporary mankind. And this includes Wordsworth. While Wordsworth's Solitary remains a recluse, Beppo returns home. The Byronic hero as he had been conceived in all his various incarnations died triumphantly unrepentant in Manfred's tower.²⁰¹ *Beppo* is also something of a return to the Enlightenment. Poetry having spent over twenty years in self-imposed exile, Byron gestures back toward Pope, and manages a glance at Burns. His characters rejoin society, but of course are never fully of society, the required detachment for moral comment or satiric purpose being maintained.

Of all the sad travellers along this Romantic road, Byron is alone in finding freedom beyond separateness. He finds a lesser world, but one in which he can endure. He asks not for transcendence. *Childe Harold* could no more than the poet in the *Hyperion* poems pass "the threshold of the green recess" (625), no more than the traveller in *Alastor*. But Byron neither surrendered to it, nor hid from it, nor died too young to have solved it. Because he had generally rejected transcendence out of hand, he was able to negotiate a pragmatic compromise of freedom with the universe that the ideologues could not. Though no poet or hero, Beppo at least returned. He returned to a society no happier nor more moral than when he left, to a wife in stark contrast to the faithful and chaste loves of the Romantic quest, but he returned. Perhaps sadder, perhaps no wiser, in *Beppo* Byron at least rose the morrow morn.

²⁰⁰Personally, I prefer the wilds of Platonism, idealism, and pantheism, but that is a minority opinion in our Byronic age.

²⁰¹Only on the wings of Lucifer could the old Byronic hero ascend past the hall of Arimanes and the man who finally takes this flight, Cain, is no hero, but a society man of human vulnerability and powerlessness; he has inherited Manfred's angst, but this is all.

The moral answer Byron gives in *Mazeppa* demonstrates finally and conclusively how radically his poetic intent has shifted: now, it is pure *carpe diem*:

"What mortal his own doom may guess? / Let none despond, let none despair" (853-54). Combine this with the relaxed style and attitude of *Beppo* and the message is clearly that the arbitrary universe can be tolerated by us, the way Beppo and his world have to accept the fickleness of their own arbitrary, willful creator:

Whate'er his youth had suffered, his old age
With wealth and talking made him some amends;
Though Laura sometimes put him in a rage,
I've heard the Count and he were always friends.
My pen is at the bottom of the page,
Which being finished, here the story ends:
'Tis to be wished it had been sooner done,
But stories somehow lengthen when begun. (xcix)

His early satires had been directed entirely at earthly targets (in *English Bards*, *The Curse of Minerva*, *The Waltz*, etc); starting with *Beppo* the irony and jokes fly upward as well. Heroic resistance having not moved the Oppressor, curses and denials become laughs. If this is not real freedom of the will, it is at least free expression of the will, a will proclaiming itself unbowed. Byron arrived in this hopelessness, not dragged wailing like Coleridge, not in grim denial like Wordsworth, not in the sadness of the condemned like Keats; Manfred went rushing down that road, like Lear tearing at his clothes as he went, determined that if Necessity was to force him this way, he would make it his choice. If man was to be alone, without ally in the universe, if powerless and condemned to pain, then Manfred was going to make a freedom out of a Necessity.

We have seen how the author of the satire mimics the Author of the universe:

The gentle reader, who may wax unkind,
And caring little for the Author's ease,
Insist on knowing what he means--a hard
And hapless situation for a Bard. (l)

J. Drummond Bone looks to this passage from *Beppo*, and a number like it here and in *Don Juan*, as examples of Byron happily throwing off the chains of teleology, or cosmic purpose, playing the arbitrary god of his own universe. Recall

also his answer to Murray's quite natural puzzlement over the order of *Don Juan* (remembering the severe form Byron imposed on the historical dramas): "I *have* no plan--I *had* no plan . . ." (ltr. 12 Aug 1819). And he drops the resolution of Juan's final adventure, as life itself has no resolutions to offer: "I leave the thing a problem, like all things" (XVII.xiii). Manfred in effect accused the spiritual powers of just such abrogation, between bouts of self-accusation (exactly as King Lear had done), an argument which Byron later resurrected in *Cain*.

This is what I mean by Byron's postseparateness, his acceptance of the impossibility of unity or transcendence, of a world without meaning through purpose. Man, he might have told Keats, is indeed as you feared he was in the odes, ever on the outside of immortality looking in through a portal of art. Raphael, he says, "vies / With all we know of Heaven, or can desire, / In what he hath bequeathed us" (*Beppo* xlvi). This represents a huge descent to pragmatism from Manfred's arrogant claims, only a few months before, of the right for a mortal to walk with the gods, to dispute with the destinies, of the right to union with Astarte (Love, Beauty itself). Now he tells us that though we may view the unattainable through the eyes of the poetic imagination (as Raphael or Canova, as Faust saw mirrored Helen), we can only anguish over it. So, openly, he says in *Beppo* that he intends to put the whole business behind him. The world of living, sensations, and action carries on, and so should we. He continues to explore separateness in *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, *The Deformed Transformed*, and by contrast, *The Island*, but only the frustration resulting from impossibility, never the striving for possibility. All return to the *Beppo* answer, an answer which, we ought not be surprised, is Epicurean: live well and harmoniously, enjoy what moral pleasures you can.

The utopia of *The Island* recalls Byron's dismissal of the illusions with which the mind is diseased. But all earthly surcease of sorrow rests with the one illusion of Love. Ultimately, he stands with the statement in *Childe Harold* IV: "Who loves, raves . . . but the cure / Is bitterer still" (cxxiii). Byron cannot be viewed as anything but a pessimist, but all thought, if it is to remain sane has to light a candle somewhere. Byron's optimism comes to us not in entire works (except for *The Island*), as much as in two recurring themes across his entire opus. First is the omnipresent butterfly of Love, of Love as the one way of redeeming the

necessary pain of this life. He urges us to joy when it briefly is ours. Second is his own endurance. His works are the product of a heart that from the very earliest deeply felt the pain and disappointment of life, yet refused the frauds, the homilies, the self-deceptions that religions and philosophies offer to distract the sufferer. Where Coleridge balked and Wordsworth withdrew, Byron rushed out into the storm. King Lear's "pour on, I will endure" is echoed in Byron's "there is that within me which shall tire / Torture and Time" (*CH* IV.cxxxvii). English literature knows only two great characters who accepted not the tyranny, who defied the storm to learn from it, who wrestled with the angel on its own terms: Lear and Manfred. Neither compromised, neither averted his eyes. And it is in Byron's steadfastness in holding to his message of dignity amid hopelessness, rather than the pessimistic message itself, that we can find his greatest affirmation of human worth.

Dignity meets life's pain and darkness with quiet heroism and courage. To add needed light to life, Byron offers the kind illusion of Love, while it lasts, and the wry skepticism of *Beppo* when it wears thin.

When we know what all are, we must bewail us,
But ne'ertheless I hope it is no crime
To laugh at *all* things--for I wish to know
What, after *all*, are *all* things--but a *show*?
(*DJ* VII, 1822, ii)

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APPENDIX 1

A Reappraisal of Wordsworth's Godwinism

No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*. . . . 'Throw aside your books of chemistry', said Wordsworth to a young man, a student in the Temple, 'and read Godwin on Necessity'.

This recollection by Hazlitt in *The Spirit of the Age* (18) has led many scholars to understand the period of Wordsworth's experiments with pure rationalism and his resultant crisis of moral questions (1794-96) as being a period of temporary conversion to Godwinism. This was so even before the revelation of his meeting with Godwin and subsequent visits in the Godwin diaries, which mostly supports the connection. Wordsworth's own discussion of those years tell of an ingenuous and eager young man, like so many others, swept along in the enthusiasm for liberty and republicanism, in the breathless excitement of possibility. *The Prelude* gives us Wordsworth's own familiar, perhaps too familiar confession. The tone is mocking, the attitude of the man condescending to the boy that he was; yet behind the hyperbole there is the apparent reality of someone who had stepped out of character in the sheer theatricality of the times:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance . . .
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise . . .
The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away.
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams . . .
Did now find helpers to their heart's desire
And stuff at hand plastic as they could wish. . . .
(10.692-721)

Although the tone of this passage is indulgent, even euphoric, there is an overriding tone of mockery. Wordsworth sees his theme as one of "juvenile errors" (637) and the hubris which told these little more than children that the world was to them as clay. Only a dangerous hubris would be "half pleased with things what were amiss" because "'Twill be such joy to see them disappear" (734-35). The "inert were roused" refers to himself, confirmed by his later confession of being "roused up" (799).

The philosophy which found a ready audience in young minds of unlimited hope could only be one of abstraction. The hopes of idealistic young men are not fired by pragmatism, the hearts of people not transported by ideologies short of the religious.

the philosophy
That promised to abstract the hopes of man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
For ever in a purer element,
Found ready welcome . . .

Like many an ideology,

the dream
Was flattering to the young ingenuous mind
Pleased with extremes . . .
What delight!
How glorious!--in self-knowledge and self-rule
To look through all the frailties of the world,
And, with resolute mastery shaking off
The accidents of nature, time, and place . . .
Build social freedom on its only basis:
The freedom of the individual mind,
Which, to the blind restraint of general laws
Superior, magisterially adopts
One guide--the light of circumstances flashed
Upon an independent intellect.
(10.806-29)

Ignoring the dismissive attitude--"Pleased with extremes," "What delight!," "How glorious!"--his desires for eternal moral sanction, permanence, and freewill never changed. In the phrase "shaking off / The accidents of nature, time, and place" he describes both the appeal of Necessity over chance as well as the ministry of the eternal over the transient, in Wordsworthian symbolism, stars over

clouds. It is easy enough to see Necessity (as did Coleridge and Shelley) as representative of the eternal power at work, something reassuring and paternal, and to see how it would thus reign in robes borrowed from Nature and later bequeathed to God. Likewise, rationality demonstrates the efficacious power of the mind as well as imagination does, although in a fundamentally different manner. Analytic reason then would offer to the votary of freewill the appeal of an apparently autonomous power, and Wordsworth was never philosopher enough to speculate long on real freedom versus apparent freedom.

It seems evident that the orgy of rationalism and millenarianism of the mid 1790s was caused most proximately not by the Revolution itself, but by the death of Robespierre and relief at the end of the Terror. Liberty and progress were now seen in their vulnerability, and the hopeful rallied to the side of a disgraced mistress in the doomed hope that renewed faith would restore her chastity. The Terror had been "most woeful for these few . . . Who still were flattered, and had trust in man" (*Prelude* 10.358-60). (Flattered, we understand from Dr. Johnson, is the holding of false hopes.) The lack of any acceptable alternative to Lockean rationality (Christianity being still discredited) helped sustain the faith during the Terror. Then, with the Terror ended, faith rebounded, and young men grasped at sullied hope as an abandoned child rushes to embrace the barest likeness of her mother: no matter how disgraced: "I stuck / More firmly to old tenets . . . till round my mind / They clung as if they were the life of it" (*Prelude* 10.799-804). Though the subsequent news from France was often still "of heartless omen," yet, for the reborn, it "had not the power / To daunt me. In the people was my trust . . ." (10.576ff). The power of hope will create its own teleology. It was apostasy to doubt that the "triumphs" of republicanism would

be in the end
Great, universal, irresistible.
This faith, which was an object in my mind
Of passionate intuition, had effect
Not small in dazzling me . . .
(10.584ff)

The religious nature of this "faith" (586), where the descent into the Terror seems a loss of innocence--"a fall being suffered" (600)--recalls this continuing

need to establish, re-establish, or rediscover moral authority, a surrogate religion. He tells us much by the exorcism of these references from the more orthodox 1850 edition. Hope never fully recovered from the great realization that even the most idealistic of men were weak and corrupted beyond perfecting and that personifications cannot turn Liberty into an autonomous divinity able to lead men in spite of themselves. Many times will Wordsworth look across the unbridgeable gulf with a lament for something fully lost--"That time is past"--and I believe that much of the distance that he felt as an adult from the receptivity and ingenuousness of childhood was in part at least because that childhood happened to be on the far side of the Terror, a now irrecoverable world of innocence, separated by more than dulling maturity.

So *Political Justice*, which was published in early 1793, attracted little attention for a year or so, until, with the end of the Terror, an audience was ready for it. Its important message was not only that mankind was perfectible, a reassurance desperately needed by the faithful, but also that improvement would be gradual and proceed without violence. Wordsworth, whose faith had suffered a "fall" and would not likely be taken in by more calls for sudden radical change, found in this reasonably paced reform exactly the compromise he needed. The Terror had made reformers cautious, and here was a cautious philosophy, speaking of patience and discussion. But at the same time, they clung to faith in ultimate perfection, there being no alternative--Christianity, even if it *had* been an option in those secular times, offered no social hopes, only individual transcendence for the select few--and here was a philosophy which continued to promise perfectibility (a term Godwin later cautiously defined, "the progressive nature of man"). The French had moved too fast, too passionately, too violently; the fault was in their methods and actions, not in man. Just this sort of implicit reassurance was the meat of *Political Justice*.

The other prominent attraction of Godwinism was its basis in disinterested benevolence, which was the highest possible Enlightenment social ethic. He offered utilitarianism at its most austere and religious, a "duty" which was disinterested, which required that a man's attention be taken out of himself, a moral prerequisite echoed in all the Romantics.

The man who has once performed an act of exalted generosity, knows that there is no sensation . . . to be compared with this. . . . He ascends to the highest of human pleasures, the pleasures of disinterestedness. . . . No man so truly promotes his own interest, as he that forgets it. No man reaps so copious a harvest of pleasure, as he who thinks only of the pleasures of other men. (4.11.188)

(Having exiled self-interest, Godwin wisely let it in through the back door.) The appeal was obvious. Henry Crabb Robinson speaks for most when he recalled:

it made me feel more *generously*. I had never before, nor, I am afraid, have ever since felt so strongly the duty of not living to one's self, but of having for one's sole object the good of the community. (1.3.32)

Though largely French in its atheist tone, in the extremity of its secular millenarianism, and associated with French ideas due to the timing of its appearance, still *Political Justice* remains identifiably English. Besides the general tradition of necessitarianism, Leslie Chard observes that "his economic theories [were anticipated] by Mary Wollstonecraft, his concept of perfectibility by Condorcet and Price, and his emphasis on popular education by the Dissenters at large" (189); and Ben Ross Schneider points to

the Locke, Clarke, Butler, Paley tradition of Cambridge. Locke's *Essay* contained Godwin's associational psychology, his doctrine that human beings are under the necessity of doing good, his pleasure and pain ethics. Clarke's *Being and Attributes of God* suggested Godwin's belief that even God was bound by necessity to do good . . . that morality is antecedent to the divine will. . . . (211)

Political Justice captured precisely a mix of "traditional" English philosophy (the Lockean empirical tradition), modern Dissenting views, a religious moral austerity, and more than a whiff of millenarianism, best calculated to intoxicate passionate young men and sanctify their illusions. It stood firmly on accepted philosophical commonsense while transcending it; Christian ethics remained, while its institution and metaphysics were abandoned. It is not surprising that Godwin's confidence in the power of benevolence and the power of man to perfect himself "gave his whole philosophy the aspect of a religion" (Schneider

223). Godwin himself quite honestly, if privately, admitted in a 1794 note in his Diary, that his popularity derived from the fact that his ideas "coincided in a great degree with the sentiments then prevailing in English society" (Chard 189n).

Certainly Wordsworth was ensnared in fashionable thought quite soundly, if only briefly, but there is no sure way of knowing to what extent his entanglement was due to Godwin and how much to other influences. His references to this time speak clearly only of rationalism; beyond this we are speculating. What Wordsworth does say in *The Prelude* seems to lead us away from *Political Justice* as the sole or even primary influence. Of this period, he speaks "of an abasement in my mind / Not altogether wrought without the help / Of Books ill-chosen" (MS M, 5.630ff). The plural "Books" suggests that if *Political Justice* was involved, other volumes were as well, and the phrasing of the previous line suggests that books may not have been the foremost influence anyway. This alone does not exclude Godwin, for during 1794-95, Wordsworth associated with a Cambridge crowd much obsessed with Godwinian and other radical social theories (the group later included Godwin himself). The nonliterary influences he mentions must include the conversations, probably ranging across all fashionable theories, of these desultory intellectuals. Ever vulnerable to peer pressure, it is fair to say with Schneider that "Wordsworth was swept up to Godwin's doorstep on a Cambridge tide" (225).

Yet, Wordsworth never calls himself a Godwinian, nor even a necessitarian, at least in writing. Coleridge calls him a necessitarian, which he may well have claimed for himself when Coleridge first met him, but which was far shallower than Coleridge believed. Insecure himself, he would exaggerate his conversion of Wordsworth to Christianity by overstressing Wordsworth's early radicalism.

Wordsworth approaches Godwin most closely in a letter to Matthews of June 1794, on the subject of "monarchical and aristocratical governments" and their overthrow in France. He opens with a unqualified disapproval of such governments "however modified," but the Terror in France gives him pause:

The destruction of those institutions which I condemn appears to me to be hastening on too rapidly. . . . a writer who has the welfare of mankind at heart should call forth his best exertions to convince the people . . . [toward] a gradual and constant reform. . . . he

should diffuse by every method a knowledge of those rules of political justice. . . . need I add that I am a determined enemy to every species of violence? . . . Freedom of inquiry is all that I wish for. . . .

The effect of the Terror in turning minds to Godwinian caution can hardly find better expression than in this passage. These words and tone are so Godwinian, particularly the telling phrase "political justice," that this letter may well place Wordsworth's introduction to Godwinism to the spring of 1794 or earlier.

I wish to demonstrate that the attitude itself is not necessarily Godwinism or heavily influenced by Godwin but is Wordsworth's own nature as well. It seems clear, for example, that his own account of his pre-Godwin radicalism, his "zeal," in *The Prelude* reflects but the show of passing fancy, an exaggeration of his earlier self for greater contrast with present wisdom. Even while pointing up its intensity, he demonstrates its superficiality by recounting how his conservative nature continually surfaces to quell the excitement. By telling us twice of how he was "roused up," he is tacitly admitting to his normally phlegmatic nature. The enthusiasm of "Bliss was it ⁱⁿ that dawn to be alive" subsides to the temperateness of being "not uninformed that men / See as it hath been taught them, and that time / Gives rights to error" (10.743ff). The death of Robespierre occasioned an explosion of faith justified and hope renewed, before moderation again comes to sober the party:

Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy
In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus
Made manifest. 'Come now, ye golden times',
Said I . . .

earth [shall]

March firmly towards righteousness and peace.'
Then schemes I framed more calmly . . .
(*Prelude* 10.539-52)

His "Then schemes I framed more calmly" is something more than a normal cooling of initial enthusiasm, the calm after a moment or event of great emotion. There is an unease in the account of this passion, a disharmony in the close conjunction of "vengeance" and "eternal justice," offered not only by the older poet in criticism of his younger self, but a reflection of a schism within the youth himself. A heart more uniformly dyed with radicalism would show a greater

consistency, growing conservative if at all only with advancing years (as we see in Coleridge and Shelley, once we sort out their didactic intentions). Wordsworth could be radical only when raised to an artificial level of excitement by events or intoxicating company (e.g. Beaupuy). The 1790s for Wordsworth were actually lived at a level moderation, "interrupted by uneasy bursts / Of exultation," which quickly returned to moderation upon reflection. His phlegmatic nature and introspective mind ensured against radicalism. In fact, he was vulnerable to such arousals only for the few years following Cambridge (which included the Terror and its immediate repercussions).

The passage continues in the moderate vein:

Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
The madding factions might be tranquillized,
And--though through hardships manifold and long--
The mighty renovation would proceed.
(10.553ff)

He looks to the long-term, historical view, in a manner very like Godwin's own Stoicism. Necessity, Godwin says, leads to "a tranquil and placid temper."

He . . . who regards all things past, present, and to come, as links of an indissoluble chain, will, as often as he recollects this comprehensive view, find himself assisted to surmount the tumult of passion; and be enabled to reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the same clearness of perception, the same firmness of judgement, and the same constancy of temper, as we are accustomed to do upon the truths of geometry. (*Political Justice* 4.8.174)

The shared vision in this passage is remarkable (echoes of Priestley as well). Godwin's comprehensive view of the workings of a mechanical universe leads him to the same desired tranquillity as Wordsworth's comprehensive view of an eternal universe of animated power (the link is also with Stoicism and the sublime). Both recall these images through associative pathways, both find recourse in the similarity of their universe to geometric principles, and both cling to hope (or its pretense) in adhering to Enlightenment (Lockean) beliefs in the ultimate breadth of the moral benefit.

Other parallels appearing prior to his exposure to Godwin, or which suggest Wordsworth's own character, include his abhorrence of the idea that moral good

may arise from evil methods. He condemns those of the Terror in France "Who were content to barter short-lived pangs / For a paradise of ages" (*Prelude* 10.319-20). Godwin's "religious" utilitarianism also would never let the ends apologize for the means. Wordsworth's attending to Basil Montagu (the elder) during the latter's emotional and marital problems in London demonstrate a natural empathy, a maternal ministering described by the suppliant as a benevolent application of Godwinian medicine: "He unremittingly, and to me imperceptibly, endeavoured to eradicate my faults and encourage my good dispositions" (Moorman 1: 262). Wordsworth's experiences in France (1792) are reported to have included speculations on perfectibility (*Prelude* 9.364-71), on disinterested benevolence (9.393-94), and examples of his preference even then for discourse and persuasion (9.261ff). Such things virtually define Godwinism, yet all characterize Wordsworth prior the publication of *Political Justice*.

On the other hand, their irreconcilable differences touched on deep issues. For instance, Godwin spoke out strongly on private property as corrosive to benevolence, as it encouraged greed, envy, and unnatural class distinctions (a Platonic observation, though most directly from Rousseau). Wordsworth, by contrast, understood intuitively the way in which certain sorts of property (such as land, house, and livestock) became visible forms of eternity, agents of the continuity of life within and between generations, anchors in the rush of time and decay (e.g. the sheepfold in "Michael," the cottage in "The Ruined Cottage," the birdcage in "The Sailor's Mother"). Similarly, Godwin discourses on the evils of beggary as something contrary to justice; that is, insofar as it encourages the unnatural divisions implicit in gratitude and charity. Utility requires that property be distributed in such a manner as to bring the greatest good, nothing else may enter in: "It is therefore impossible for me to confer upon any man a favour; I can only do him a right" (2.2.75). Wordsworth agreed so far as gratitude was concerned (see "Simon Lee") and he did not dispute the evils and humiliations of this life; but his affection for these people, his sensitivity to the human worth of the unfortunate, clashes in tone with Godwin if not in message. Further, their contrast in style, Godwin's reasoned discourse, disdaining example and allegory (not forgetting his gothic novels), compared with Wordsworth's unfailing desires to put even the most philosophical ideas into dramatic setting, seems to suggest

two minds not likely to find a comfort in each other's approach, even when the ideas were similar. Finally, with Godwin's dismissal of the familial affections (amended too late for Wordsworth's allegiance), versus the immense importance of maternal affection (Nature or God to man, and man to man) to Wordsworth, there is no possibility that Wordsworth could have thought of himself as a Godwinian had he been thinking clearly during this period. This, more than any other issue, shows how shallowly must Wordsworth have attended Godwin's philosophy, or more likely, how mistaken must scholars, and Hazlitt, have been to assume that the attraction was more than casual and curious at all.

Having seen that much of what could be imagined as Godwinism in the thought of Wordsworth may as easily be attributed to his own nature or to other influences of the age, and having suggested some areas where the two might fundamentally oppose each other, I come now to look at what Wordsworth was actually writing during this period, 1794-96, and how Godwin and his philosophies relate to Wordsworth's compositions.

Whenever it was that Wordsworth became acquainted with Godwin's philosophy (and I have posited that it was at least by the spring of 1794), it is known that he first met Godwin on the evening of 25 Feb 1795. The meeting was a success and Godwin's diary records nine subsequent visits, all but two unaccompanied, through to August, when Wordsworth moved to Racedown in Dorset. Their friendship continued in a moderate, distant way from then on. Considering Godwin's tendency to grow wearisome to his friends, their continuing good relations may have been possible because of the very sparsity of actual contact between them; or because Wordsworth would probably not have cared to dispute with him, having, but for those few youthful years and occasional outbursts later, never really been interested in issues of social or political justice; or because by temperament both were essentially conservative, undemonstrative men from the beginning and only grew more so with age in a somewhat parallel way.

From the publication of *Political Justice* in February 1793, to his apparent rejection of rationalism sometime around early 1796, Wordsworth wrote or may have written these poems:

"The Birth of Love" (trans from Segur), 1792-May 1794.
 "[At the Isle of Wight]," summer 1793.
 "In Vain Did Time and Nature Toil to Throw," Jul-Sep 1793.
 "The Western Clouds a Deepening Gloom Display," Jul-Sep 1793.
 "Guilt and Sorrow" (or "Salisbury Plain"), Jul-Sep 1793.
 "Inscription for a Seat by the Pathway Side," Apr-May 1793.
 [Translation of Horace Ode III, xiii], Apr-late 1794.
 [Imitation of Juvenal--Satire III], Aug 1795--Apr 1796.
 "The Hour-Bell Sounds, and I Must Go" (Fr. trans.), early 1796.

The first thing we notice is the surprising scarcity of original work. This confirms the truth of his claims of rationalism's inhibiting effect, where he mentions only an unsatisfying "work / Of false imagination," which may refer to the imitation of Juvenal. Clearly something was interfering with or distracting his creative imagination during that year and a half. But in the preceding months, from spring of 1793 through summer of 1794, a major work was completed: "Guilt and Sorrow." The editors of the Penguin edition of *The Poems* and Stephen Gill both date most of this to Jul-Sep 1793, with the fair copy completed by May 1794. These dates are earlier than proposed by Mary Moorman (autumn 1794). It is difficult to conclude from the character of the Sailor whether Wordsworth had a Godwinian model in mind, although the connection Moorman proposes between this character and Godwinian philosophy remains the popular one, that is, that Wordsworth offered "as perfect an example as he could of Godwin's theory that a man's good dispositions may, under the pressure of external circumstances, lead him into crime." (Moorman I.262)

Still, such an assertion remains speculative. The condemnation of social and political factors as corrupting otherwise good men's lives was hardly unique to Wordsworth and was in fact exactly the opinion that fueled most of the reform sentiment as well as much of the despair over increasing industrialization (e.g. Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village"), and was the very popular, if radical, legacy of Rousseau. Wordsworth himself touched on this theme as early as "Descriptive Sketches" (1791-92). The Sailor seems to have been necessitated to his crime by his unjust impressment into an unjust war. But the Necessity is never openly asserted, nor even brought to the Godwinian extreme of relieving him from all blame. A disavowal of personal culpability, which Godwin was forced to conclude from his strict Necessity, was unacceptable to Wordsworth. Further, it was

impossible in a tragedy; the convention required culpability, and as the Greek drama showed, responsibility was no necessary prerequisite. Yet, equally he could not permit an unjust society and government to escape from culpability either. So he takes the typically Wordsworthian solution of remaining ambiguous. The evils of war and the governments that fight them are his theme, but they are blamed only to the point where the individual retains the power of personal redemption and reform, to the point where his crime still sticks to him enough to leave him dramatically interesting and morally culpable. This is clearly shown in the repentance of the father who had been beating his son (lii, 460ff). The crime may be traceable to the debasement of their poverty in part, but there is no suggestion of irrevocable Necessity. The father remains culpable, and he is brought to repentance through an appeal, very dear to Wordsworth and very unlike early Godwin, to the heart and unbreakable familial affections. These "natural" sentiments prove themselves again all-powerful in the welling up of the Sailor's sympathy for the suffering woman and child.

Elsewhere, the attitude of "Inscription for a Seat by the Pathway Side" remains fully Wordsworth's with any concordance with Godwin only in the familiar presumption of a future of benevolence and virtue. Here, the inescapable Necessity of aging is softened by benevolence. I would have thought that a greater optimist or more a more determined ideologue (Shelley comes to mind) would have written in a tone that celebrated the "joys" of a future defined by virtue and not the pensive melancholia of Wordsworth.

In Wordsworth's prose, Godwin is notable for being absent, or mentioned without warmth, which also tends to militate against suggestions of any strong influence. The fragmentary "Essay on Morals" (1799) condemns Godwin, but as a rationalist only, not as a necessitarian or for any of the other differences I have mentioned. His objection was, not coincidentally, a chief objection of Coleridge as well: that analytic reason was impotent to affect morality because it did not touch the deepest well-springs of our motives. In his letters, Godwin appears only four times, none of which occur during the period of his supposedly most intense Godwinism. In 1796, he writes a letter to Matthews somewhat contemptuous of *Political Justice*; in 1798 there is a letter to Godwin concerning his Mary Wollstonecraft biography, the attitude being only vaguely friendly; an 1801 letter

speaks only of business matters; and a final letter in 1811 has a stiff formal attitude and ends with an irritated complaint at Godwin having sent him a manuscript C.O.D. Nowhere is there even a remote allusion to a former attachment any stronger than mild respect.

Still, it would not be totally unreasonable to suggest the possibility that the contempt for Godwin's prose style (veiling a probable disaffection for the philosophy) expressed to Matthews in 1796 may represent a pulling away from a recent unnatural affection, that if he was temporarily infatuated, against his truer nature, there might be expected to follow a strongly felt revulsion when the spell is broken. Further, the want of reference to Godwin or Godwinian views in the poems (except possibly for "Guilt and Sorrow") and in the letters of 1794-95 may well be accounted for by the following considerations: First, there is evidence of concern by Wordsworth over government surveillance of suspected radicals. Dorothy's reassurances to Richard Wordsworth in this matter (letter, 28 May 1794) demonstrate the general concern, and William's delicate wording of his political views in letters to Matthews of May and June 1794 are indicative of Wordsworth's own discretion. Second, although he showed no hesitancy in later years to write didactic poetry of a political nature when the opinions expressed were not controversial, he wrote none at this time when, presumably, his emotions were strong but his views dangerous. His one political composition, the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (1793), he suppressed. This again confirms that he felt the repressive weight of governmental disapproval, which may have worked in tandem with his confessed self-repression through rationalism at this same time. I offer these as likely factors, but without considering them sufficient counter evidence.

There is finally to consider the "crisis of that strong disease," that catharsis of early 1796 so often interpreted as a purging of Godwinism from his soul. His youth, from his Cambridge days to this moment, had been one of attempted conformity to the radical and republican ideals of his contemporaries. He was never entirely successful and, as I have said, was at best a very irregular republican. But the attempt to apply reason to the questions which haunted him must have been honest enough.

In the Enlightenment, even philosophic challenges to reason (and its handmaiden, empiricism) by such as Berkeley, Hume, and Kant were highly reasonable investigations conducted by eminently reasonable men. The unstable and contrary Rousseau himself did not directly challenge this rationalist hegemony. Such was the triumph of reason that it served the anarchists as well as the established order. Like a Machiavel matriarch, Reason could turn against her own former kingdom to ride in at the head of the revolutionary army and preside anew as Empress of the new order. Wordsworth's own rationalist nature is therefore not surprising, nor, as a young man, is it surprising that he would follow the dissatisfied, passionately rationalist masses of Dissenters, republicans, Frenchmen, and other disaffected young men. Only painfully honest Wordsworth, however, would have dissected his most tender and secretive emotional comforts. Reason's subsequent, inevitable failure as a moral authority was as crushing as was deep the hope which he had invested in it:

What then I learned--or think I learned--of truth,
 And the errors into which I was betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From the beginning . . .
 And . . . was thus confounded more and more,
 Misguiding and misguided. Thus I fared,
 Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
 Like culprits to the bar . . .
 now believing,
 Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of moral obligation--what the rule,
 And what the sanction--till, demanding *proof* . . .
 I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair. . . .
 (*Prelude* 10.881ff)

In the 1850 edition, he elaborates:

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
 This was the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
 Deeming our blessed reason of least use
 Where wanted most: 'The lordly attributes
 Of will and choice', I bitterly exclaimed,
 'What are they but a mockery of a Being
 Who hath in no concerns of his a test
 Of good and evil; knows not what to fear

Rousseau, and most Romantics, are the universal, affirmative, constitutive "knowledge" of the heart. These he has always held as the highest morality, which strongly opposed him to Godwin (in the *first* edition of *Political Justice*.)

3. Thus we are "The dupe of folly," the fool of blindly-marching reason, following a discipline while ignorant of its ultimate truth or error; or "the slave of crime," of those passionate urgings of self and momentary interest.

Analytic reason, the erstwhile prosecutor, he has unmasked in its inability to deliver the moral certainty it promises, discovered as secretly reliant on unsupported faith. But analytic reason does not necessarily imply Godwinism. Godwin was but the most recent and novel player in an Enlightenment pageantry. Wordsworth was throwing off not a single philosophy but an entire age, more specifically, a moral epistemology. Moreover, it is *only* reason's ability to act as a moral guide that is at issue, not all employments of reason. Humbled down to "prudence," reason served admirably in practical living (a concession Coleridge and the mature Shelley also allowed it), and as he could never so betray his youth to become more than a very tepid Christian, Wordsworth continued to depend upon reason's comforting methodological surety as his own alternative transcendentalisms faded away. Furthermore, even if Godwin's dependence on reason for his utilitarian moral utopia is to be dismissed, not so necessarily the many other tenets of Godwinism, such as gradual, moderately paced reform, the usefulness of discussion and persuasion, the progressive nature of man (doubted later by Wordsworth for different reasons), and the ultimate goal: benevolent disinterestedness. Thus, rationalism is far too pervasive and Godwinism too varied casually to equate the two.

Given this much doubt as to how much, if at all, or in what areas, Wordsworth was influenced by Godwin, we should look into the possible sources and motives of the quotation from Hazlitt which opened this discussion, that which has been so important in suggesting and supporting the Godwinian connection. The first thing we notice was that Hazlitt could not have witnessed the incident himself, nor even heard *of* it soon after the event, as he did not meet Wordsworth until early 1798, over two years after Wordsworth could have conceivably made such a statement. Nor is there any reason to suppose that this is the sort of quotation that

Hazlitt might have heard about someone he had not yet met, especially considering his young age at the time of Wordsworth's rationalist period and considering that Wordsworth was yet almost completely unknown. Thus, he would have had to have heard it later, from Wordsworth himself or secondhand, from Coleridge perhaps. Coleridge did not meet Wordsworth until late August or September of 1795, and for a long while their association remained sketchy (see letter to Matthews, 24 Oct 1795). Whether they kept any company in London at this time, when and where Coleridge would have had to have heard the statement at the Temple, is unknown but unlikely.

It then comes down to the possibilities that Hazlitt heard it years later, either directly from Wordsworth or from Coleridge (there are really no other likely candidates), or that the story was pure invention, to make a wider point. The meetings in 1798 of young Hazlitt and Wordsworth at the peak of his powers we do know to have been filled with vigorous and contentious debate, mostly motivated, I would surmise, by the younger man. "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" (1798) are typically assumed to have been born of these occasions. In them, Wordsworth argues against the rationalist approach, against purely intellectual, analytical reason, as we might expect. It is most probable that their conversation included Godwin's theories and that they found this a fruitful and contentious subject (young Hazlitt being more sympathetic). Under these circumstances, Wordsworth may well have told a story on himself, as he does in *The Prelude* and elsewhere, where his younger self comes in for some ridicule as he uses his own early foibles to contrast to his present wisdom or as a cautionary tale. Recalling his strong sense of dialectic and dramatic contrast, he may be counted on to stress a polarity, to paint himself in caricature to make a point (as in *The Prelude*, or any number of tactless or unseeing poetic narrators). Thus, a story Wordsworth tells on himself should well be suspected of exaggeration.

Hazlitt himself was no more than most writers before the modern age of scholarship especially concerned with purely factual accuracy. He typically quotes from memory, with notorious inaccuracy, and was certainly likely to be no more pedantic in representing Wordsworth's younger days than Wordsworth himself. He wished accurately to capture a sense of the Godwin phenomenon; truth lay in accuracy of impression and principle, not in dry empirical factualness.

Finally, even if this quotation represents, accurately and fairly, what Wordsworth said at a particular moment during his rationalist phase of 1793-96, it does not especially prove that the value and interest he found in *Political Justice* had anything directly to do with Necessity. If he advised "read Godwin on Necessity," he may have meant no more than "read Godwin's philosophical tract" as opposed to his novel (*Caleb Williams* came out during this period). That "read Godwin on Necessity" might, furthermore, be a reference to *Political Justice* as a whole rather than Godwin's position on Necessity specifically, may be plausibly concluded from the prominent position that Necessity occupies in the work, as well as the rather bold manner in which Godwin uses it. Of this latter, it only need be remembered that Godwin's doctrine of Necessity owes most allegiance to the fashionable (among the young) French *philosophes* and English radicals (like Priestley), in distinct contrast to the rather embarrassed manner Necessity had been handled by the distinctly unfashionable British ideological establishment (Paley, *et al.*). (It was difficult to handle because it was widely viewed as both completely irrefutable and thoroughly destructive of morality.) In the work itself, Necessity forms the physical as well as the doctrinal centerpiece. It is centrally located (book 4, chapter 7) and the key chapters on morality and the development of the mind, those of greatest interest to Wordsworth, follow immediately: "Inferences from the Doctrine of Necessity" (chap. 8), "Of the mechanism of the Human Mind" (chap. 9), "Of Self-love and Benevolence" (chap. 10), and "Of Good and Evil" (chap. 11). All these draw their momentum and authority from the proof of Necessity, and are the very subjects which Godwin also saw as the most critical, needing special attention:

Of the many controversies which have been excited relative to the operation of opinion, none are of more importance, than the question respecting free will and Necessity, and the question respecting self-love and benevolence. These will occupy a principal portion of the enquiry. (*Political Justice* 4.7.157)

"Necessity," then, was so well married in this book to all hopes for a moral future for man and society that the very term could easily come to stand for these hopes. A mind alert to the potential dangers of philosophic terminology and careless assumptions might not casually accept the doctrine of Necessity just because it supported attractive conclusions. But a young, ingenuous poet, looking not for rational proof but belief, not for a method of analysis but a moral authority that

superseded the need to question, might very well be led to this mistake. The full implications of Necessity would become apparent soon enough. So the advice "read Godwin on Necessity" might mean simply "read Godwin's philosophic work" or it might mean "read Godwin's views on perfectibility and his denial of self-love," or the like. In general, it is not likely that Necessity was understood or accepted in itself, as much as a catchword for something else altogether.

Ultimately, speculations on whether the comment actually was made, for one of the reasons given, was a fancy by Coleridge or Hazlitt, or represents an invention or exaggeration Wordsworth told on himself, which I think most likely, matters less than the physical evidence. His character and his poems suggest that any Godwinism or necessitarianism Wordsworth *may* have felt infected him briefly, superficially, and had very little direct influence over his work. In the broader question of Wordsworth's *rationalism* do we find the real struggle of 1795-97. Those wishing to understand his "crisis of that strong disease," I will advise to look to Wordsworth's battle with analytic reason, in the wider context of his search for a secular moral authority, and take Godwinism for a red herring.

APPENDIX 2

Duty, the Corrupt Will, and Intolerance

The rigor in Coleridge's Christian and Kantian "duty"--where absolute freedom opposes absolute slavery (both defined as absolute obedience) guaranteed by an irresistible Necessity--provides him a bedrock for culpability, and therefore morality. The Christian "Believer" is convinced

both that a state of enduring Bliss is attainable under certain conditions; and that these conditions consist in his compliance with the directions given and rules prescribed in the Christian Scriptures. (Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion, no. 2, *Aids* 163)

And surely, compliance with these directions and rules "cannot but have *consequences*," consequences which are, in fact, "distinctly described, enumerated, and promised in the same Scriptures, in which the Conditions are recorded. . . ." Further, of these consequences, "the greater number are of such a nature that they cannot exist unknown to the individual, in and for whom they exist." Can he doubt that those consequences equally promised, but exterior to his senses, are not equally sure as those he observes? Those benefits he does experience provide "the sure marks and safe pledges, that he is at the time in the right road to the Life promised under these conditions." He strays here toward the Calvinist explanation of election: he who believes knows he is chosen, and indeed he is; he who does not believe, does not feel "the safe marks and sure pledges," the experienced "consequences" of belief, and this tells him he is not chosen.

This led him into familiar intolerance (the religious, intentionalist demon which the Enlightenment sought to exorcise) which he struggles to address:

it is *not* in our power to disclaim our Nature, as *sentient* Beings; but it *is* in our power to disclaim our Nature as *Moral* Beings. It is possible (barely possible, I admit) that a man may have remained ignorant or unconscious of the Moral Law within him: and a man need only persist in disobeying the Law of Conscience to *make* it possible for himself to deny its existence, or to reject and repeal it as a phantom of Superstition. Were it otherwise, the

Creed would stand in the same relation to Morality as the Multiplication Table. (Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion, Preliminary, *Aids* 132-33)

That is, there is clearly a Necessity between conscience and will. But a sleight of hand is at work here. Like Kant, Spinoza had also propounded a moral law both universal and necessary, and if Coleridge was to escape such pantheism, which denied culpability, he must renege on the universality of moral Necessity. Freewill needs sufficient elbow room in which to exercise moral agency, for the purpose of culpability. But in puncturing the universality of the moral Necessity, the link from conscience to will, he undermined the basis for the transcendental claims of Kant's Supreme Moral Principle (as well as throwing doubt on divine justice). On the other hand, if a man possibly "may have remained ignorant . . . of the Moral Law within him," then only through mysterious and unaccountable divine predestination can the damnation of such a blameless sinner be justified. Coleridgean morality could not allow an uncompromising predestination, but he seemed boxed in.

He escaped by immediately affirming the universality of the innate morality, that is, the conscience and powers of reason, but interrupting the necessary connection between these and the virtuous man, this by throwing blame on the corrupted will. "Every Man is born with the faculty of Reason," he tells us often enough, and "In respect to their Reason all men are equal" (*Friend*, no. 9, 12 Oct 1809; *Works* 4: 2.125.) Reason and the conscience are inner voices

every man may *find* for himself. If any man assert, that he *can* not find it, I am *bound* to disbelieve him! I cannot do otherwise without unsettling the very foundations of my own moral Nature. For I either find it as an *essential* of the Humanity *common* to Him and Me: or I have not *found* it at all. . . . (Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion, Preliminary, *Aids* 133)

There is an ethical proscription, familiar to Christianity (though not to Judaism), recently reiterated by Kant and reasserted by Coleridge (*Friend*, no. 9), that men are moral ends-in-themselves; they must never be used as means to an end. Given the certainty of divine justice in the next world, men, as individuals or societies, must not condemn or punish each other in this world, as to do so would be using the miscreant for the deterrence or education of others. He is keenly

aware of this moral roadblock to his confirmation of culpability, the problem of men being justly condemned and punished by other men.

To avoid the utilitarian use of men as means to a social end yet still allow for punishment clearly not aimed at reform of the miscreant (e.g. capital punishment), Coleridge finds his justification, as I have said, in the errant will. He wedges the efficacious will between mechanical necessitarians on the one hand and Calvinists on the other. The materialists and sensationalists he counters with an innately corrupt will, with man as

a *fallen* Creature, not by accidents of bodily constitution, or any other cause which *human* Wisdom in a course of ages might be supposed capable of removing, but diseased in his *Will*, in that Will which is the true and only strict synonyme of the word, I, or the intelligent Self. (*Friend*, suppl. essay, 11 Jan 1810; *Works* 4: 2.279.)

He then turns about to attack the other sort of necessitarians, those extreme Protestants who would deny the freewill by exaggerating the debasement of the will, those who would have God inflict "eternal Pleasure or Pain" on "human Souls, without any power on their part either to prevent it or the actions which are (not indeed it's causes but) it's assigned *signals*, and preceding links of the same iron chain!" (280).

Luther considered the Pretensions to Free-will *boastful* . . . [and inappropriate] to the Preachers of the Gospel, whose great Theme is the Redemption of the Will from Slavery; the restoration of the Will to perfect Freedom being the *end* and consummation of the redemptive Process, and the same with the entrance of the Soul into Glory. . . . the freedom of a finite will being possible under this condition only, that is has become one with the will of God. Now as the difference of a captive and enslaved Will [in its unrestored state], and *no* Will at all, such is the difference between the *Lutheranism* of Calvin, and the Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards. (Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion, no. 1c, *Aids* 154-55)

Coleridge places himself slightly to the left even of the Lutheranism here described (which makes Luther somewhat more libertarian than he was), placing considerable emphasis on freewill in his prose, while being far more Calvinist in his imaginative works (e.g. "The Ancient Mariner").

If, as he was saying, a man claims he cannot find the evidences of moral law

(reason and conscience) within him, it is only because he will not. And

If . . . he *will* not find it, he excommunicates himself. He forfeits his *personal* Rights, and becomes a *Thing*: i.e. one who may rightfully be *employed*, or *used*, as a means to an end, against his will, and without regard to his interest. (Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion, Preliminary, *Aids* 133)

Godwin, working under the same ethical constraint, had the courage to face the exposed consequences of this ethic and forbade allowing even the guilty to suffer in order that they be a cause of virtue in others. And as he had no eternal justice in sight, culpability totally vanished. Godwin, however, did have a philosophic consistency to maintain that Coleridge, at this point no necessitarian, did not. Coleridge, further, had every incentive to reconcile divine moral ambiguities in divine sublimity. Still, the fastidiousness of his explanation suggests an awareness of his dishonesty (or discomfort):

On this principle alone is it possible to justify *capital*, or *ignominious* Punishments (or indeed any punishment not having the reformation of the Criminal, as *one* of its objects). Such Punishments, like those inflicted on Suicides, must be regarded as *posthumous*: the wilful extinction of the moral and personal Life being, for the purposes of punitive Justice, equivalent to a wilful destruction of the natural Life. If the speech of Judge Burnet to the Horse-stealer (You are not hanged for stealing a Horse; but, that Horses may not be stolen) can be vindicated at all, it must be on *this* principle; and not on the all-unsettling scheme of *Expedience*, which is the anarchy of Morals. (133n)

I would suggest, however, that if "Expedience" (i.e. utility, using men as means to a social end) is the anarchy of Christian, intentionalist morality, punishment justified on the basis of self-excommunication is the anarchy of social justice.

DECLARATION

I, Douglas William Kenning, do affirm that this thesis (dissertation), entitled "A Failed Religion: Necessity and Freedom in the Romantic Poets," has been composed entirely by myself.

Douglas William Kenning